

MERGING MATH AND CIVICS

Forging a Critical New Emphasis on U.S. Students' Democratic Participation

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Acknowledgements and funding

We are grateful to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for its financial support, while also acknowledging the opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this material are the authors', and do not necessarily reflect the views of the foundation. The authors assume full responsibility for the accuracy of the report's contents.

To the 123 educators who participated in our study interviews and focus groups, thank you. We could not do this work without you; we are grateful for your time and thoughtful responses.

Executive summary

Motivation

Democracy depends on mathematics: tallying votes, apportioning legislative seats, and drawing districts are just a few fundamentally mathematical democratic processes. The math-based choices we make about our democracy—plurality or ranked choice voting, single-winner districts or proportional representation, electoral or popular vote to elect the president—can lead to dramatically different outcomes. Yet U.S. K–12 schools teach math and civics as separate subjects, minimizing attention to the interdisciplinary space where the two meet. This gap matters more than ever, with nearly 80% of Americans believing divisiveness is threatening democracy. We designed our study to learn educators’ perspectives on the potential for K-12 students to learn the mathematical foundations of democracy through an interdisciplinary instructional approach we call *“the math of civics”* (*“math-civics”* as shorthand in this report).

Design

In Stage One of our project (fall 2025–summer 2026), we conducted interviews and focus groups with 123 educators and curriculum providers across six states (California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas). Participants included teachers (n=59), school leaders (n=30), district leaders (n=11), state education leaders (n=6), and curriculum providers (n=17; 11 math and 6 civics). Teachers spanned elementary, middle, and high school and taught math or civics/social studies courses. We engaged participants in 30-minute one-on-one interviews or 60-minute focus groups (teachers), audio-recorded and transcribed conversations, and thematically analyzed transcripts with attention to differences by respondent role, school type, and state policy context. The goal was a cross-sector view of current practices, perceived barriers, and pathways for scaling math-civics concepts.

Results

Broad enthusiasm for math-civics. Every participant group expressed enthusiasm for teaching math-civics topics to address students’ genuine interest in civic issues and answering the enduring math class question, *“When am I going to use this in real life?”* Many were optimistic that developing math-civic literacy can reduce polarization and strengthen democracy, as well as empower future voters and leaders.

Broad interpretation of math-civics. Some participants understood it as the mathematics underlying democratic institutions (e.g., voting systems, redistricting), while others used the term more loosely to refer to data literacy related to a broad range of topics.

Current instruction addressing math-civics is minimal and unsystematic. Despite the enthusiasm, respondents overwhelmingly reported minimal current instruction at the intersection of math and civics. Where it does appear, it 1) clusters around election-cycle activities such as mock elections and 2) depends on the initiative of individual teachers rather than on a systemic approach.

No overwhelming consensus on where math-civics belongs. Respondents voiced roughly split opinions on the ideal home for teaching mathematical concepts underlying civics concepts. Math proponents support using such instruction to teach *“real world”* math. Civics/social studies supporters feel it is a natural fit in civics/social studies classes since some of the topics are taught there already (e.g., electoral college) and because civics has less onerous standards requirements, which leave time to teach non-required topics.

Respondents see advantages to teaching math-civics across grade levels. They believe elementary grades are developmentally well-suited to interdisciplinary teaching; middle school is an optimal entry point, aligning with existing civics curricula and students’ math readiness; and high school options include electives or units within AP Statistics, Government, or Economics. Several cautioned that an elective-only model would bypass the students most likely to benefit.

Respondents across roles reported five primary barriers to math-civics instruction. Standards and testing: Crowded, high-stakes curricula leave little room for content not tied to tested standards—yet alignment with standards is also seen as the strongest lever for adoption. Revising standards is a slow, state-specific process. Time and prioritization: Instructional time is scarce, and civics is already de-prioritized relative to math, ELA, and science. Teacher content knowledge: Civics teachers may feel unprepared to teach math concepts, and vice versa; co-teaching models are attractive but require dedicated planning time educators rarely have. Skill variation: Wide gaps in students’ grade-level math proficiency, especially in Title One schools, risk excluding students or burdening civics teachers with remediation. Political sensitivity: Especially in states with policies like Florida’s Parents’ Bill of Rights, teachers fear repercussions for teaching topics like gerrymandering, even when they view the content as non-partisan.

What educators say they would need: Professional development that is compensated, flexible (e.g., online, train-the-trainer), grade-specific, and available on demand. “Turnkey” curriculum resources—lesson plans, pacing guides, digital and printable materials, along with tech support—that require minimal additional lesson-planning by teachers. Dedicated funding to pay for needed resources. Evidence of the efficacy of math-civics approaches for improving student outcomes, for example, those related to student engagement with learning, math proficiency, and citizenship. Neutral framing and proactive parent and community communication.

Implications

We recommend developing, piloting, and evaluating standards-aligned math-civics lessons for math classrooms, while also advocating for the inclusion of math-civics concepts in standards revisions. Lesson integration should prioritize core, standards-aligned courses over stand-alone electives. Partnering with core curriculum providers already vetted and adopted by districts offers a lower-friction path into classrooms. Durable progress will require parallel investment in standards alignment, teacher professional development, turnkey materials, sustained funding, and an evidence base. Effective scaling will likely require both top-down policy efforts through state standards and assessments, and bottom-up support from teachers and communities.

Next steps

Results from this study will inform a systemic effort to pilot and rigorously study math-civics teaching and learning. Funding priorities include development of standards-aligned curriculum and professional learning supports for teachers, advocacy to update state and national standards, and research to build the evidence base and support implementation.

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Introduction: Math-Democracy Gap

Democracy runs on mathematics. Tallying votes, allocating legislative seats and party delegates, deciding sizes of legislatures, and drawing district maps are just a few of the processes relying on mathematical concepts. Critically, the specific mathematical choices we make about our democratic processes—plurality or ranked choice voting, single-winner districts or proportional representation, electoral or popular vote to elect the president—can lead to dramatically [different outcomes](#). Once we recognize this fact, a natural question emerges: Does our democracy use mathematics that supports meaningful representation, creates systems that respond to people rather than parties, and builds institutions that incentivize cooperation rather than gridlock? Or does it reinforce polarization, help elect extreme and fringe candidates, and leave millions of people disenfranchised and otherwise feeling that their voices do not matter?

An informed citizen should be able to engage with these questions and evaluate democratic systems from a quantitative, rational viewpoint that is removed from partisanship and ideology. This capacity must be cultivated, and the natural place to do so is in our K-12 classrooms.

American schools teach a great deal of mathematics. Though civics has been neglected for decades, school-based attention to this subject has been increasing over the past few years. However, math and civics are typically strictly compartmentalized. Almost no instruction occupies the interdisciplinary intersection of the two, addressing the mathematical foundations of democracy. This is not a minor omission. The absence of education on the mathematics of voting methods, legislative apportionment, gerrymandering, the Electoral College, proportional representation, political data analysis, misuse of statistics, and quantification of political power leaves citizens vulnerable to manipulation, misinformation, and disenfranchisement.

The idea that democracy depends on mathematics is not new. From democracy's early days in ancient Greece, votes had to be counted, and seats had to be apportioned. Mathematics even played a central role in America's founding; the Declaration of Independence, for instance, is in essence a [mathematical document](#). It begins with axioms asserting the existence of certain unalienable rights: life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Then it advances a theorem: the colonies do not need the British Crown. A theorem requires a proof, and the Declaration provides one: *"To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world."*

This structure is no accident. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were scholars of Euclid and admired the formal structure of *The Elements*, one of the most consequential mathematical texts ever written. At the Constitutional Convention eleven years later, the dominant intellectual influence among the delegates was the Enlightenment, with scientific and mathematical thinking at its core. Even today, legislative bills retain this mathematical character; they are hierarchical and formal, presented in a logically structured way.

Given this historical context and the urgency of a civic education that transcends polarization and partisanship, democratic quantitative literacy deserves a curricular focus. Mathematics provides a natural framework for developing that literacy. Moreover, these topics occupy a uniquely interdisciplinary space at the intersection of mathematics, statistics, data science, computer science, economics, political science, and history. At a moment when [educators are rethinking](#) how curricula can prepare students for a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world, the mathematics of democracy offers a rare opportunity to teach intellectually rigorous and consequential topics that will enhance students' civic agency and capacity.

Why this matters now

Nearly 80% of Americans believe that [divisiveness is threatening democracy](#). Many feel their voices no longer matter, polarization is out of control, and governing institutions fail to uphold values they find meaningful and legitimate. Basic democratic processes feel disempowering and misleading. The gap between ordinary citizens and those in power has never been wider.

BY THE NUMBERS: 80%

of Americans believe divisiveness is threatening our democracy — one reason our team sees urgency in building students' math-civics literacy.

Our deep disagreements extend beyond politics, to include what counts as evidence, how to interpret facts, and even what constitutes truth. Instead of serving as tools of clarity, the [math of democracy](#) has been weaponized to serve [partisan interests](#). The numerical language underpinning U.S. democracy is being manipulated, distorted, and deployed by both sides of the aisle. Social media and other online algorithms are designed to promote engagement over all else, leading to prioritization of hot-take polarizing content over more nuanced content. We are saturated with numbers yet under-equipped to scrutinize them, making ourselves vulnerable to numerical manipulation exacerbating polarization.

When the empirical basis of public discourse itself becomes partisan, democracy loses its capacity for deliberation. Trust in institutions erodes, civic life becomes tribal, and citizens view one another not as partners in self-governance but as existential threats.

Exacerbating these threats are widespread frustrations with the structure of our democracy. [Winner-take-all elections](#) reward base mobilization over coalition-building. Primary systems hand power to unrepresentative slivers of the electorate. Single-winner districts entrench safe seats and filter out moderates. Gerrymandering silences millions of voters. Most citizens lack the tools needed to critically evaluate existing systems or to engage with reform efforts.

Mathematics, in its impartiality and transparency, is uniquely positioned to mitigate both the informational and institutional dimensions of democracy. It provides a common language that shifts attention away from emotion, identity, and ideology and toward cooperation, moderation, and shared facts. At the same time, it furnishes a diagnostic lens for democracy's infrastructural problems and a template for building systems that are fairer, more inclusive, and more resilient. However, bad actors can exploit math-civics illiteracy by wrapping harmful assertions and policy into the "objectivity" of math.

There is ample evidence that the public appreciates the promise of the quantitative approach to restoring and healing our democracy. Widespread public interest in the [Institute for Mathematics and Democracy](#), the documentary [Counted Out](#), and Dr. Volić's book [Making Democracy Count](#) reflect a desire for tools that can help people understand and engage with democracy in a more rigorous and constructive way. Educators, researchers, and democracy practitioners who have integrated the mathematical approach into their work have likewise found that civic quantitative literacy empowers citizens to identify flaws in democratic institutions, evaluate democratic reforms, and demand greater transparency and accountability from public officials.

The challenge is that our educational system does not systematically cultivate these skills. As debates over ranked choice voting, districting wars, and the merits of the Electoral College increasingly occupy the public square, few people have been empowered through education to engage with these issues. Without a mathematical component, education for citizenship leaves students only partially prepared for democratic participation. Civic quantitative literacy is therefore not a luxury but a prerequisite for a healthy democracy.

Merging Math and Civics: Phase One Study

The overall purpose of our project is to increase awareness, education, and research about K-12 curriculum and instruction of the mathematical foundations of democracy (hereafter referred to as “*math-civics*”). U.S. K-12 schools largely do not address the mathematical aspects of democratic mechanisms such as voting, re-districting, allotment of legislative seats, identifying and engaging likely voters, gerrymandering, or analysis of public opinion and political behavior data. Developing students’ conceptual understanding of fundamentally mathematical features of U.S. democracy in their K-12 education would strengthen the U.S. population’s capacity to effectively participate in democracy.

Between fall 2025 and summer 2026, we conducted interviews and focus groups with 123 participants in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas), to learn about whether and the extent to which education participants—teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state education leaders, and providers of math and civics curriculum—may currently address student learning objectives at the intersection of math and civics, and if so, how. The analysis focused on identifying themes cutting across participant groups and contexts, and examining differences in perspectives by role, school type, and state policy environment.

Results provide a cross-sector view of current practices, perceived barriers, and potential pathways for advancing integrated math and civics instruction. Project Stage Two will be a systematic effort to develop, pilot, and study math-civics teaching and learning resources.

Phase one study participants

The final sample included 106 participants across four educator participant groups from six states—California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas: classroom teachers (n=59), school leaders (n=30), district leaders (n=11), and state education leaders in math and social studies (n=6). Participating teachers taught elementary (n=24), middle (n=15), and high school (n=20) grade levels in either mathematics (n=46) or civics/social studies (n=33), though a few of the elementary grade teachers taught both subjects. School leaders included principals, vice principals, and instructional leaders, with equal representation from each of the above-mentioned states. The sample was predominantly female across both teacher (41 of 59) and school leader (24 of 30) groups and reflected a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds. We also interviewed curriculum providers (n=17), including 11 focused primarily on mathematics education and 6 on civics education providing perspectives from both content areas on the opportunities and challenges associated with math-civics integration. Curriculum providers were not limited to the six sample states.

1

Demand exists—but is unmet

To understand whether instruction at the intersection of math and civics can play a meaningful role in K–12 education, we asked all respondents about the value of teaching mathematical foundations of democracy, its relevance to students and teachers, and the extent to which teaching related concepts is currently present in schools. Teachers, leaders, and curriculum providers expressed broad enthusiasm for teaching and learning math-civics concepts, while also expressing nuances in what they understood this to mean. This results section describes participants' perceptions of the value of math-civics, their interpretations of what it encompasses, the current state of math-civics instruction, and the opportunities respondents see for connecting mathematics to students' lives as active contributors of U.S. democracy.

Math-civics matters for strengthening our democracy

All participant groups expressed enthusiasm for integrating math and civics as a strategy for helping students navigate an increasingly complex and polarized political environment and preparing them for informed democratic participation. Many participants were optimistic that fostering students' math-civics literacy can reduce polarization and strengthen democracy:

"[B]y teaching our children to become thinkers and critical consumers, that's when I think we have a chance in this country. Not by sheltering them and not talking about it and hoping they never find out about it." (School Leader, Florida)

"I feel very strongly that it's critical to have math literacy for our whole democracy to be able to have really critical conversations. What's happening now in our democracy, talking about all the redistricting and the gerrymandering. And most people do not have the ability to even participate in those conversations and therefore it just gets pushed aside. And who loses? All of us lose when we can't participate in those conversations." (Curriculum provider)

More broadly, several respondents felt that math-civics instruction is important to educate and empower tomorrow's voters and leaders:

"I do think we do need to teach this information from an early age because we're talking about their ability to understand how important it is to be involved in the process. You've got to be involved in the process and you have to be aware of what the process is." (Teacher, Florida)

"For students to be active participants in our democracy today, they need to understand some of these mathematical concepts to understand what's going on in our country politically. I think we'd all have a stronger democracy if students knew these math concepts." (State Leader, New York)

"I think it's important that students understand that someone can get the majority of the vote and still not win, because of the electoral college. I do think it's important that they understand that. And the math is the reason that it works." (District Leader, Florida)

"I think [math-civics] is very important. People need to understand how their local and national system or state level system functions, and how they fit into that as a voter and as a constituent. So, for example, there's, there's a couple towns around here that use ranked choice voting for like their mayoral elections, and so that was on the ballot a few years ago is whether they wanted to shift. There's math involved there. And it boils down to are people able to understand or predict how their decisions are going to be reflected in the aggregate? I think it's definitely important to open up that black box for people." (District Leader, Massachusetts)

Students are invested in civics issues

Participants highlighted that students, especially in higher grades when approaching voting age, have reason to be invested in civic issues, so expanding math-civic instruction would provide relevancy:

"One thing that's come up time and time again is civics is genuinely relevant to students. Students care about key civic issues, and they want to have conversations about those issues... They have a hunger for that, and a need for that." (Curriculum provider)

"Many kids were talking about, 'Oh, you know, the election, who are you going to vote for? Why are you going to vote for them?' And for the first time, we're thinking about, well, how can we capitalize upon this? The kids are going to talk about it. They're going to see it on the news, and so now, how can we do it across curricula? How can we add mathematics into it where even just making predictions, how many students would vote, how many don't vote, and also, what impacts does it have in the real world?" (Teacher, Texas)

Several participants also highlighted the importance of math-civics—and social studies more generally—to minority students in particular:

"[F]or students who are coming over, coming to America as teenagers, just making sure they understand how [the political system] works and how important that is." (Math curriculum provider)

"I think that a priority for a lot of our young people whose families are immigrants, undocumented, or of mixed status. We've started to realize, this is going to be a real need for us to really bank on, what our kids need and want to learn right now." (School leader, California)

"I think it's of the utmost importance because, again, I just told you that my school has almost 500 minorities. About 400 of them are Hispanic. I need our families to understand the electoral college, the voting process, what's required, how to access what's required... I think it's of the utmost importance because what's happening in our country impacts my children on a daily basis." (School Leader, Florida)

Even when new, the idea of math-civics had broad support

For many respondents, the concept of math-civics itself was novel. Although they had not previously considered fundamentally mathematical democratic institutions at the intersection of mathematics and civics, learning more about the idea during the interview or focus group sparked their interest and prompted them to see new possibilities for connecting mathematics instruction to students' civic lives. One California district leader reflected:

"It absolutely piques my interest because we're in the middle of a shift in math instruction throughout the state of California to provide a better foundation of comprehension into

real life application, not just memorization of processes and algorithms, if you will. This sort of generalizes that concept that every teacher can and should have some math integration.”

Similarly, a Massachusetts District Leader recognized they had not previously considered the intersection of math and civics but appreciated its value:

“I see what you're talking about. I totally get it. It makes a lot of sense. And even just with the recent Supreme Court decision, when you look at the impact of the total erosion of all the voting rights legislation and what's happening in Memphis and places like that, like, do people understand the way that the gerrymandering is totally diluting the black vote in the cell? So, I think it would be helpful to teach those things more explicitly.”

It is worth noting that while some interviewees specifically emphasized the value of exploring civics topics through a mathematical lens, many simply highlighted the importance of strengthening civics education in general. During interviews, it was not always clear whether participants believed that integrating mathematics and civics would increase civic engagement, or whether they were referring to the benefits of civics education alone. Because many responses focused primarily on civics concepts rather than how mathematics could be meaningfully integrated, it was difficult to determine whether the perceived benefits were unique to the math-civics approach or reflected the value of civics education more broadly. As shared above, many respondents had not previously considered the integration of math and civics, which may have affected their valuation of math-civics relative to civics more broadly defined.

Participants interpreted “math-civics” broadly

Although we began interviews defining math-civics as the mathematical foundations underlying democratic processes—voting systems, representation, redistricting, legislative apportionment, etc.—interviewees often interpreted the concept more broadly. Rather than focusing exclusively on the mathematics embedded in democratic institutions, participants described math-civics as encompassing statistics and data interpretation skills needed to understand and engage with a wide range of issues related to civic themes. Referenced themes ranged from social justice and climate change to personal finance and media literacy, well beyond electoral mechanics (see box below).

EDUCATORS UNDERSTOOD “MATH-CIVICS” BROADLY

- Social justice, climate change, and election polling
- Personal finance
- Historical social, political, and economic trends
- Public budgets and taxation
- Media literacy for evaluating political and statistical claims

“Where math comes in, it's perhaps analyzing historical data, reading graphs... I think it's very important for them to understand the numbers and how to read a graph, how to understand the news. When they see a percentage or number, they need to understand how much this number is going to affect them in their lives.” (Teacher, Illinois)

“I get the question of ‘if we are doing exponential functions, why this is important?’ So, I like to bring in those real-world connections. And so, we're doing exponential functions, but we're doing it how long does it take for the country's budget to double? As students who are starting to pay taxes and their parents are paying taxes and they're about to do

all these grown adult things, it's important that they know what they're doing." (Teacher, Texas)

The current education landscape features minimal instruction at the intersection of math and civics

Despite the widespread enthusiasm for math-civics expressed during interviews and focus groups, participants overwhelmingly reported that little instruction currently occurs at this intersection. Participants noted that while civics concepts are taught across the K-12 spectrum, they viewed both math-civics and civics instruction more generally as “*completely missing*” or “*very siloed...like apples and bananas at a store.*” Though there is interest and desire to incorporate math-civics education, schools are “*under a lot of constraints,*” which we explore in greater depth later in this report.

Nevertheless, participants identified scattered examples of teachers, schools, and districts incorporating elements of math-civics into instruction, even if the math aspect was not explicitly emphasized. These efforts generally took one of two forms. In one, activities centered around presidential election cycles, such as classroom voting simulations and lessons on elections and the Electoral College, at the elementary, middle, and high school levels:

OPPORTUNITY

Elections are already the entry point

Mock elections, ballot simulations, and lessons tied to real campaigns were the most common math-civics activity educators described — at every grade band. That existing enthusiasm is a ready-made foothold for going deeper into the mathematics behind voting and representation.

“Our school did a mock election, our social studies teachers, between Trump and the other candidates, and it was real fun. All of my students were talking about it, it was very amazing... It should be done in every district” (Teacher, Texas)

Though leveraging elections for civics (and sometimes math-civics) instruction was the most common activity described, the emphasis of the exercise as described tended to be on the experiential aspect of voting and of civic engagement — for example “*put[ting] their ballot into an actual machine... get(ting) a little voting sticker when they're done,*” rather than on understanding the mathematical mechanisms underlying voting systems.

Second, participants commonly described integrating quantitative reasoning into broader civically relevant topics such as local politics and political history, for instance, “*us[ing] data literacy to support the six stage civic action projects*” in Massachusetts. One teacher of younger students described a “*penny harvest*” in which students learned about “*counting coins and connect[ing] to community causes.*” In older grades, electoral college lessons were common, such as this teacher’s example:

“One of the things that I would always do that I honestly would generate a lot of student discourse around in 11th grade is when we looked at the electoral college and the small state effect and how small states almost have more representation. So we'd look at state populations and, you know, try to figure things out like that. And then in the 12th grade civics course, gerrymandering is certainly a topic that comes up quite a bit.”

In addition to these two forms, we heard examples of interdisciplinary collaboration:

"When we start working for elections... we track also how historically groups have voted over a period of time and here in the United States, so they are able to correlate that, and I do work with a math teacher for that unit, specifically." (Teacher, Texas)

"So 7th grade is civic and economic studies...We were able to create some common assessments that you can do in your math, ELA, and social studies courses that did not feel like they were stepping on the toes of what math was doing or ELA...It's basically a budget project and the math and the budget project worked well enough with the basic level of math in seventh grade." (District leader, Illinois)

These narratives highlight that election cycles and voting are the primary space where math-civics instruction occurs in schools. Interviewees typically characterized such efforts as isolated due to the initiative of "individual teachers" who "just love civics or math teachers who love bringing real-life examples to the classroom," rather than being systematic or widespread.

Connecting learning to the real world is a key benefit

Across participant groups, participants described a demand from students to understand the real-world relevance of content and skills they learn in school. Many noted students frequently question how classroom content connects to their everyday lives, future careers, and the issues they encounter as members of society. As one teacher stated, *"The biggest thing would be connection to the real world, current issues that are happening."* A California state education leader commented, *"The content areas are not out in nature in isolation, they really do interplay with each other. And this is a great example of that."* A school leader from California explained:

"I think it's especially important when it's difficult to tangibly explain to kids why this math is important. We have heard the running joke of, when are we really going to apply this? Or when do we use the Pythagorean theorem? Or when are we going to apply these algorithms? And I think we could help kids see just how meaningful [the math can be]."

Although participants noted students' concerns about real-world relevancy in both subjects, they noted it is especially pronounced in mathematics, where students often question the practical value of what they are learning. Math teachers and others involved in math instruction noted that math-civics provides a tangible way to show math's relevance to real-world issues, which could potentially drive student engagement. As one example, an elementary teacher explained how when practicing voting with students, she always has them then calculate the votes, *"make(ing) connections to real life situations."*

Participants viewed math-civics as a promising way to address this challenge by situating mathematical concepts within authentic civic contexts; according to a Massachusetts teacher, *"...pulling in the math concepts to be less conceptual and more grounded in real world things."* In short, they felt that math-civics could help answer, *"the students' age-old question, 'When am I ever going to use this?'"*

Teachers also highlighted the potential for math-civics topics to fit well with applied learning approaches like project-based and inter-disciplinary pedagogy. Project-based learning provides students with an opportunity to apply the concepts they have studied in a rigorous way. As a California teacher explained, *"I actually think this would be very interesting if it was inquiry- or project-based."*

2

Where in the school day does math-civics belong?

Determining which courses and grade levels are ideal homes for math-civics concepts is a key consideration for future scaling efforts. We asked participants whether math-civics topics fit best within mathematics courses, civics courses, or another instructional setting, and for which grade levels. Some respondents like the idea of integrating math-civics concepts into math curriculum to teach 'real world' math. Others felt civics is a 'natural fit' topically. Respondents slightly preferred middle school, while also voicing how math-civics concepts can be taught at the elementary and high school levels.

Respondents voiced pros and cons for including math-civics in math classes

The top reason educators we spoke with felt math classes are a good home for teaching math-civics concepts is its suitability for making learning relevant by, *"connecting to that real-world example,"* as discussed in the previous section. As one state education leader explained, *"looking at math through a civics lens, I think is a natural way to make students say, oh, I understand why I'm doing this, you know, make it more 'real-world.'"*

However, participants noted challenges for teaching math-civics concepts in math classrooms. A primary challenge they cited are standardized testing requirements and concern that math-civics concepts may not align to state math standards (which we address in the next chapter). As one curriculum provider succinctly expressed, *"You'd be hard pressed to fit civics into math as it exists today with the strictness of the standards and the districts' obsession with [standardized testing]."* The restrictions tend to leave teachers with little flexibility to incorporate new content. Nevertheless, respondents were able to think of ways to fit math civics into existing math standards and accountability systems, for example as one Illinois state leader suggested, through preparing students to *"write a written response around the Electoral College and then kind of embed mathematical equations."*

Interviewees also identified a lack of grade level proficiency in math as another challenge to math-civics integration into that subject. As one California teacher explained, *"To be honest with you... ..a lot of kids can't do basic math...this just sounds like another thing to teach, and I'm sure most teachers are overwhelmed right now."* One Florida district leader similarly shared, *"The [seventh graders] got the idea of the winner being the one who had the higher states. But the problem they had was that they couldn't do the [basic] math to add up the columns of numbers."* This challenge was particularly voiced in the context of Title I schools and other high-need contexts. Curriculum designed around assumed grade-level math concepts may therefore inadvertently exclude or frustrate students.

Respondents also voiced pros and cons for including math-civics in civics classes

In support of civics classes as a home for teaching math-civics concepts, respondents felt civics is topically a better fit. According to a Florida district leader, *"civics is the place where you're learning about elections, civic duty, those types of things. It's where it fits...that the benchmark is for the Electoral College is going to be in civics, right?"*

Challenges to incorporating math-civics topics into civics courses included civics teachers' math capacity and general de-prioritization of civics, translating into minimal instructional time for civics in general. Regarding civic teachers' capacity, concerns included whether civics teachers are sufficiently

knowledgeable of the math concepts. A Florida district leader explained, *“I think [civics teachers] definitely need extra training ...if they start also having to grasp some math, that might make them feel very uncomfortable because, like it or not, math makes a lot of people uncomfortable.”*

We also repeatedly heard the concern that civics and social studies do not receive as much instructional time as mathematics, science, and English language arts. Reasons include lack of state testing in social studies, less funding compared to STEM, and tradeoffs to make room for the focus and push on literacy and math. Civics and social studies, interviewees described, often get shortchanged in calculations of how to spend classroom time. As one California school leader explained, *“We’re constantly adding things that take up time in the classroom. I could give you a list of things that we now have mandated to do in the classroom that take up classroom time and social studies gets cut.”*

Middle school preferred, though elementary and high school also provide opportunities

A few respondents advocated for introducing math-civics curriculum at the elementary level, as early as kindergarten. As one teacher expressed, younger children are *“so curious, so eager to soak up knowledge.”* A curriculum provider explained, *“...if we really want to say that we value civics training and its integration with other topics, we really have to identify how we can start early and build from there.”* These respondents believe that younger students are more naturally receptive to interdisciplinary learning before subject-area boundaries solidify. *“It’s easier...when you have the same teacher, or at least close colleagues, in a school teaching kids math as teaching science and social studies.”* They envisioned math-civics being taught during homeroom or community time through hands-on activities like mock elections — activities that already exist in many schools and that would be enhanced by a structured curriculum.

Moreover, as noted earlier in this report, elementary grade teachers and school leaders frequently described using election cycles as opportunities to introduce students to foundational concepts of democratic participation, most notably voting. These activities are often already embedded within classroom practice, suggesting that elementary schools are well positioned to incorporate math-civic learning. Combined with the greater flexibility for cross-disciplinary instruction that characterizes elementary education, this creates a natural opportunity to integrate mathematics and civics in ways that build on existing teaching practices rather than requiring entirely new curricula.

Middle school was the most widely preferred placement for math-civics instruction, with 8th grade mentioned most frequently. Respondents saw it as the right moment for a foundational course: students are old enough to engage meaningfully with civic content, and the math required for most data literacy applications is within reach of most students at that point. Several teachers and school leaders also noted that existing civics curricula already become more substantive during the middle school years:

“In Massachusetts, 8th grade is definitely our primary civics year...I would imagine those concepts being particularly fruitful in 8th grade... 8th grade is when students are engaging in those topics most deeply.” (State leader, Massachusetts)

High school was most often envisioned as the setting for an elective or advanced course, within courses such as (AP) Statistics (*“what is sampling bias?”*), (AP) US Government (*“What makes a two-party system worse or better?”*), (AP) Economics, as well as other history and social studies courses. However, teachers also noted that advanced and AP courses do not currently make room for math-civics applications.

Interdisciplinary co-teaching is attractive, though resource barriers are prominent

Some respondents envisioned a model in which math and civics teachers either co-teach an interdisciplinary course or co-plan across their separate courses, each reinforcing what the other is doing so that students encounter the same concepts from two disciplinary perspectives. This approach has the advantage of keeping each teacher within their area of expertise while breaking down the departmental siloing that typically keeps math and civics isolated from one another.

"I don't envision them teaching it together. I envision them building upon the learning that's happening in the other classes to make those connections, which I think is really powerful for students because then it's relevant...they see that it's interwoven, that life is that way as well. So...I would say co-planning and then delivering simultaneously, so that it builds upon and supports the students' understanding in a more meaningful and relevant way." (District leader, California)

"I think ideally it should be interdisciplinary. I think that would be really beneficial, to have math instructors who are able to help with mathematical concepts, where you have the social studies or statistics teachers that are willing to give the context that they can provide there." (Teacher, California)

"I can see an argument for math teachers explicitly teaching it, and I can see an argument for social studies as well. And I think even better is if you can get them to kind of tag team it and maybe you're doing a project in social studies where they explain the civic stuff and then you do the research and the number crunching in your math class." (State Leader, New York)

Some teachers envisioned the interdisciplinary approach as allowing for more flexibility in implementation; math-civics could be slotted into current schedules as a unit or special set of classes, rather than an entire course.

"The opportunity for faculty to co-teach a unit, not necessarily a whole class, but just a unit or a lesson, to bring the math teacher into the civics classroom and vice-versa... then the kids are also seeing that adults who have different perspectives and disciplines are also capable of informing each other and helping each other to think...I think it's possible." (Teacher, Massachusetts)

Along with enthusiasm for the idea of interdisciplinarity and collaboration to pursue math-civics instruction, interviewees identified time and resource obstacles. Meaningful collaboration requires, "common planning time, common professional development opportunities... and common expectations," as well as ways to, "share successes." (District leader, California). Yet few schools have the resources or time to build cross-departmental coordination into school schedules. Without dedicated planning time and thorough administrative support, the model risks becoming aspirational in theory while unworkable in practice.

3

Student learning standards drive instructional changes

Across participant groups, state learning standards and required standardized testing emerged as central factors shaping the feasibility of math-civics implementation. Participants consistently described state standards and assessments as constraints on instructional innovation, as well as critical mechanisms through which math-civics could achieve broader adoption. They frequently noted that educators are far more likely to adopt new approaches when they align clearly with standards, curricular materials, and assessment expectations. They viewed standards as a powerful opportunity for scaling math-civics in two possible ways: first, by aligning math-civics concepts to existing mathematics and social studies standards, and second, by modifying existing standards to incorporate math-civics learning.

TENSION**Standards: the biggest barrier and the clearest path forward**

Respondents described standards both as the main obstacle to new content and as the most reliable lever for scaling math-civics — alignment with standards was the factor most likely to make teachers adopt something new.

Learning standards are a primary limitation

Respondents emphasized the expectation for teachers to prioritize teaching content aligned with state standards and standardized assessments. Standardized test results are critical to performance assessments for teachers, schools, and districts, and time is limited and curricula are crowded. Respondents thus shared concerns that prioritization of math-civics concepts may be incompatible with existing demands. Incorporating new content under existing standards *“might be quite a challenge, because they are so very test driven”*, explained one school leader. A teacher stated, *“our goal is to graduate kids, and if civics gets in, good. If it doesn’t, oh well.”*

This idea of prioritizing measured, tracked outcomes came up in various ways. A curriculum provider emphasized that school districts are, *“accountable to what happens on their standardized tests, and...to the graduation rate. The superintendent is hired and fired by the school board on that basis. So, everything else is nice-to-have.”* Another curriculum provider discussed the *“power”* of the state tests driving, *“what people teach...because your job is dependent on how you do on the state tests.”* This individual explained the schools’ rating, and even students’ self-image, are, *“dependent on how they do on the test.”*

Teachers and school leaders consistently emphasized that classrooms already operate under considerable time-related pressure to cover required standards, prepare students for standardized assessments, and accommodate a growing number of mandated initiatives. *“[W]hen I teach math at the elementary level there are more units that I have than I can feasibly cover in a year.”* Within this environment, respondents perceived introducing additional content—even content that educators viewed as valuable—as unrealistic unless it directly supported existing curricular goals, or something else was removed. As one New York school leader succinctly noted, *“time is going to be the biggest thing...it’s already so jam packed.”* One school leader explained that even if teachers are on board with the content, something else would have to go: *“I’ve got to figure out what can it replace, or what can I get rid of.”*

Standards are also pathway to adoption

While respondents frequently described standards as a barrier to innovation, they also viewed them as one of the most promising pathways for achieving widespread adoption of math-civics. Across interviews, participants emphasized that alignment with state standards would lend legitimacy to math-civics, making it easier for teachers to justify spending instructional time on the topic and reducing concerns about deviating from required curricula. Similarly, standards can provide an important buffer against potential political scrutiny—issues described in more detail in the next Chapter:

“I think that occasionally, if some civics topics don't align with parents' morals or understanding or they feel like it's taking politics that shouldn't belong in the classroom... As long as it's grounded in the standards, a teacher [can say], ‘actually this is a California state standard,’ grounding in the standards is really important.” (School leader, California)

A few interviewees suggested that by accommodating math-civics instruction, revisions to the learning standards provides an opportunity for making learning more world-relevant for the students, especially in math:

“When I was teaching fifth and sixth grade, we had to calculate the volume of a triangular prism, and I'm like, ‘Where in the hell are these kids ever going to need this, unless they become an engineer?’ If you said, ‘We're going to replace [prism volume] with [math-civics],’ it's like, ‘Okay. Well, at least this has some credence to it, that they'd actually see it in life.’” (Teacher, California)

In New York, participants felt that the structure of the education system already lent itself well to broader adoption of math-civics instruction:

“[The state] sets the learning standards, but then districts are free to use any curricula, incorporate that however they see fit to meet their students in their local district. If you look at some of the learning standards, they kind of lend themselves right to [math-civics].” (State Leader, New York)

Respondents wary of state-level constraints shared the view that curriculum implemented through established supplemental providers might sidestep some of the state-curriculum approval process.

The process for changing standards is time-consuming

While many participants believe that integrating math and civics into existing standards may be one of the most effective ways to encourage widespread adoption, they also emphasized that changing standards is a lengthy, resource-intensive process. As one California teacher noted, *“The process of standards being rewritten or adapted is slow and laborious. So, I don't know how that would happen with any kind of speed.”*

State, district, and school-level interviewees described standard revision as a complex process involving legislative action or formal state review cycles, as well as extensive participant consultation and approval by state boards of education. The processes often occur only periodically, and require dedicated funding, and iterative standard drafting and revision cycles including public comment periods.

Curriculum framework revision and curriculum recommendation avenues may be promising

State leaders from California, New York, and Texas described opportunities to advance math-civics without immediately revising state learning standards, while recognizing potential limitations to the reach and effectiveness of these alternative approaches. A California state leader suggested, *“[An] indirect way [to expand math-civics instruction] would be a revision to a curriculum framework, and specifically the history social science framework that was last updated in 2016.”* This interviewee went on to explain that

once a topic is included in the framework indicating how to organize and teach state learning standards, the state recommends relevant instructional materials. Those instructional materials could address math-civics topics.

Another New York leader brought up the state's *"brand-new portrait of a graduate,"* as a potential avenue for prioritizing math-civics topics, explaining the portrait is, *"going to shift everything K through 12."* This leader also shared that the state is currently in the process of *"reprioritizing"* learning standards, in a way that, *"will tie together some of the subjects in ways that they traditionally haven't been taught."*

In both California and New York, interviewees explained that while standards are set at the state level, the authority for setting curricular materials and approaches is delegated to districts. In Florida, on the other hand, the state has a stronger influence over curricular materials. As a district leader explained, *"Florida is very particular about education and especially about civics education and about the usage of materials. We only use curriculum and materials that are on our state list."*

As another example of opportunity, in Texas, districts have the option to propose an *"innovation course"* and could use that avenue for addressing math-civics concepts. Innovation courses require State Board of Education approval, a determination requiring efficacy data.

While updating student learning standards to explicitly address math-civics concepts is a critical long-term pathway for scaling math-civics, shorter-term opportunities may exist through curriculum frameworks, instructional materials, and other state and national education policies.

4

Navigating the political environment

The question of whether a math-civics curriculum would receive pushback from parents and the broader education community generated rich discussion. Interviewees expected a variety of responses from parents, ranging from indifference to genuine enthusiasm, to strong skepticism and opposition.

Teachers are afraid to teach without explicit permission

In today's politically fraught environment, teachers from both red and blue states expressed fear about teaching topics that could be regarded as controversial. The gravity of concern was noticeably greater among teachers in red states, owing partly to state-level policies such as Florida's Parents' Bill of Rights that enshrine parents' right to direct their child's education. While many teachers believed topics such as gerrymandering, the Electoral College, and ranked-choice voting are not inherently controversial, they still felt they could nonetheless invite scrutiny.

"At some point, I will say Texas Republicans gerrymandered. At some point, I will say California Democrats gerrymandered. I can even play both sides there, but someone's going to be upset." (Teacher, Texas)

Teachers described the possibility for serious professional (and personal) repercussions, with some interviewees admitting they felt "scared" of what might happen, or what they might "get in trouble" for. One teacher in California admitted to wanting to "stay off the radar," acknowledging that when she was younger, she was "willing to push a lot of limits...these days...I do what I'm told." Another teacher, from Florida, explained the seriousness of the consequences:

"I'm a single mom. I am the only person that supports my children...I'm not going to deviate and teach something that could get me to lose my certificate and get me prosecuted and all of that."

Teachers also expressed reluctance to deviate from prescribed curriculum or even "scripts" for fear of negative consequences. Several interviewees mentioned that grounding the curriculum in state standards and ensuring that they are approved by or developed in partnership with proper authorities would go a long way in assuaging teacher discomfort and reducing parental pushback.

"Florida is very clear on what we can and cannot teach. And I don't think the parents would give pushback if we just stick to the curriculum that the state is giving." (School leader, Florida)

"Just like we didn't get a lot of pushback on ethnic studies, as long as it's done very mindfully and in partnership with local government to make sure that we have lots of voices at the table as this curriculum is written or designed or reviewed for adoption." (District leader, California)

Neutral framing is possible and necessary

In addition to ensuring that math-civics content is pre-approved, respondents also emphasized the need for it to be perceived as politically neutral, especially in the context of increasing polarization. As a Massachusetts district leader said: "[Y]ou wouldn't want to be caught up in something that would become a political lightning rod and then have people not be interested in it." In a similar vein, a school leader from

California also noted about civics education: *“Got to be very neutral. It's got to be very, like, fact-based. And the way that they present it can in no way show any partiality between one party or another.”*

A few interviewees noted that math-civics provides a viable avenue for teaching civics in a more neutral way. As a District Leader from Illinois explained:

“I think the math component of what [math-civics] is low hanging fruit for what is quantitatively and objectively real. [...] Numbers like the gerrymandering issue that is pretty quantitative... There are some concrete things that you can look at that can help establish what is real from opinion. So, I think there's a value there. I think that anything in 2026 that can be concrete in the political sphere matters.”

Other interviewees broadly agreed with the sentiment that math-civics constitutes a fact-based, neutral pathway for teaching what are otherwise seen as controversial topics in civics. A teacher (Florida) said: *“Parents get nervous when schools try to teach anything that is related to civics and anything that they deem as political. [But] they see math as being neutral. $3 + 1$ is always going to be 4.”* Another teacher in the same focus group noted: *“[Math-civics], which I never really thought about too much [...] would be probably the most diplomatic way to teach it.”* A curriculum provider agreed: *“[I]f this is seen as a neutral unit, a great a way to teach math through in real world applications, then I think it could be interesting.”*

IN THEIR WORDS

“Parents get nervous when schools try to teach anything that is related to civics and anything that they deem as political. [But] they see math as being neutral. $3 + 1$ is always going to be 4.”

— Teacher, Focus Group 4

Many teachers noted that they already teach math-civics concepts neutrally by sticking to facts and refraining from sharing personal opinions. One teachers' example illustrates this concept with six- and seven-year-olds voting, *“on our favorite flavor of Oreo.”* Given the neutral context of Oreo flavors, the students *“get to have an opinion, but it doesn't get feisty”*. Another teacher uses *“squares and rectangles or squares and triangles,”* to keep civics topics neutral.

Parent education and community buy-in are also critical

School leaders identified proactive parent communication and education as critical to building parent buy-in. They hypothesized that the unfamiliar nature of the curriculum could drive parents' discomfort and skepticism. One New York school leader explained:

“I think people would need to know ‘what does this civics math curriculum include?’ ...Because people have misconceptions of what certain terms and things might mean and so being clear about what this is and what this isn't... would be helpful.”

Interviewees suggested several ways of educating parents, including sending letters to households, a syllabus, and a code of conduct, shared at the beginning of the year and during parent night. One math curriculum provider currently incorporating civics concepts in math lessons described their parent education process:

“[W]e have a letter that we actually give to teachers saying...all their materials are from [curriculum provider] as a non-profit; they have internal processes to review these by a

nonpartisan review committee; here are some examples of both sides being represented [in] the materials."

One California school leader suggested parent nights represent an opportunity to *"educate everybody about the importance of civics and math,"* and spark discussion about their role in *"building a better democracy."*

5

Resources and conditions schools need to get a math-civics curriculum started

After identifying the barriers to teaching math-civics concepts, we asked participants to describe the resources and conditions they believe are necessary. Across participant groups, interviewees emphasized the importance of professional development, access to ready-to-implement instructional materials, adequate funding to support their acquisition, and evidence of curriculum efficacy. These resources and conditions were viewed as essential prerequisites for effective scaling.

Professional development is non-negotiable to develop teacher comfort

Given that the integration of math and civics was a new concept for most interviewees, respondents viewed teacher professional development (PD) as a necessary support. Teachers and school leaders emphasized the importance of feeling knowledgeable and confident in subject matter before teaching it to students. While concerns more often centered on teachers' ability to teach the mathematical component, both math and civics/social studies teachers discussed needing support and encouragement to understand and teach unfamiliar concepts.

"We talk about the popular versus the electoral vote, and you have to talk about math when you do that, but I think we may tend to focus on the geography of the country. And here, now, you're really zeroing in on the math piece, and that would be something that is unique and new, and so, therefore, would need to be explained a little bit." (Teacher, Massachusetts)

Providing adequate training came with its own challenges, however. Notably, school leaders stated that there is often insufficient time for PD during the school year, aside from mandated training.

While teachers expressed willingness to participate in PD, both teachers and school leaders emphasized that compensation for teachers' time spent in PD outside of their contract hours (e.g., evenings or weekends) and/or other financial incentives should be provided. Flexible formats such as online workshops and the train-the-trainer model were raised as potential ways to increase accessibility. One Texas teacher explained:

"...if we were given an incentive to actually learn this from people who are passionate, because there are people who are passionate, and that passion is infectious, it will make us learn to make us want to teach it. If you can have some kind of a training program that gives us points, and then send us to go teach other people on our campus, you make it a program for us to get more pay, I would totally sign up for it."

In addition, teachers wanted PD to be specific to their grade level, engaging, and to offer on-demand support when they run into unanticipated challenges.

As an alternative to providing math-civics professional development during the school year, one California state leader suggested creating a credentialing pathway that would certify teachers to teach math-civics. Establishing a formal credential could encourage broader adoption, *"that would help move things into that direction"* by signaling the subject's legitimacy and creating a dedicated pipeline of qualified educators.

Teachers seek “turnkey” resources with embedded support

Interviewees across our sample agreed that high-quality, “turnkey resources” that can be readily implemented are essential to getting math-civics content into the classroom. Many teachers felt that they had insufficient time and familiarity with the topic to create their own resources. They will need high-quality, tried and tested lesson plans, materials, and assessments provided to them to facilitate adoption. As one California teacher described “Everything has to be right there.”

Several interviewees suggested that technology could be leveraged, such as videos or digital assignments, to increase student engagement. At the same time, they emphasized that technical support and printable options should be available for teachers.

“I hope that there will be a digital component. If there's a digital component, you definitely need tech support and readily available tech support. So you know that's your 24/7 tech line or chat box, or something of that nature.” (School leader, Texas)

A few interviewees thought that a clear curriculum sequence or pacing guide showing what topics get covered when and for how long should be available to aid in teachers’ planning.

“I think having a clear scope and sequence where it's like September to June depending on the grade level where it shows like here are the things covered for this year in math and civics...I think length is also good. This will be a 10-minute thing, this will be a 30-minute thing, and that way people can prepare for that as well.” (School leader, New York)

Professional development and curriculum resources require funding

Underlying the need for PD and turnkey resources was the need for funding. School, district, and state leaders noted that new initiatives and mandates do not always come with associated funding, though “it always costs resources to put things in place.” Several interviewees mentioned public and private grants as an avenue for covering PD and curriculum costs. In the absence of funding, low- or no-cost resources, as well as resources that can be reused and copied without additional payments, facilitate implementation.

Educators want efficacy evidence

Finally, participants expressed a need for evidence that math-civics curriculum can be taught and produces positive learning outcomes for students. Given the non-trivial challenges to scaling, such evidence was seen as the final push schools need to introduce math-civics topics into classrooms and keep it there. To generate this evidence, some interviewees suggested piloting a math-civics program. A pilot would allow schools to gather teacher and student feedback and collect student outcome measures, such as grades, standardized test scores, and work samples. This body of evidence was seen as necessary to justify the incorporation of math-civics topics into existing curriculum, tailored to the needs of specific teachers and classrooms.

“Usually in the past, the people who have piloted the unit have been part of like a little subcommittee. We come back, talk about how it went, recommendations, questions, concerns, highlights, and then our leadership team would make a decision from there about whether or not we like where it fits.” (School leader, New York)

While some interviewees believed that improvements in math or civics/social studies grades were sufficient to prove the efficacy of a math-civics curriculum, others raised the question of how to specifically assess the success of combining the two subjects. “You can effectively measure math and you can effectively measure civics literacy, but I don't know how you would effectively measure how those molded together are doing.”

6

How to scale math-civics teaching and learning

Respondents described two complementary pathways for disseminating math-civics curricula at scale: a top-down approach driven by state and district leadership, and a bottom-up approach led by teachers, school leaders, and community participants. The findings below highlight the perceived strengths and limitations of each strategy, suggesting that broad and sustained scaling is most likely when policy-level endorsement is paired with grassroots advocacy and teacher leadership. Our recommended simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach is means-dependent, with resource availability determining the details of the path forward.

The case for the top-down approach

On one hand, respondents argued that beginning dissemination efforts at state and district levels would be the most effective way to achieve broad adoption. Many viewed state mandates or graduation requirements as the most reliable mechanisms to ensure math-civics get integrated into classrooms. Several interviewees suggested that, without such policy motivation, districts and schools would have little incentive to add another requirement to already crowded schedules.

“You go to the legislatures. That is the only way that it’s going to happen. None of your districts and none of your teachers are going to want to add something to their plate.”
(District leader, Florida)

In addition, respondents explained that as the “unifying entity” of all schools (District Leader, Massachusetts), the Department of Education of each state would be the most efficient target for outreach. One interviewee explained that the Department of Education typically sends newsletters with information on new curriculum and updates to state standards, and information about math-civics curriculum could be included in such a communication. Several interviewed state leaders expressed that they were open to sharing information with their schools: “We’re always willing to pass along free opportunities for teachers.” (State leader, Massachusetts)

Some interviewees proposed that districts often have leeway to mandate or encourage particular curricular approaches, making districts another possible target of math-civics advocacy. Within this vein, respondents spoke of the way larger districts influence smaller ones, such as this Texas teacher, “kind of like the domino effect. If the bigger districts follow through and show interest, the other districts in the area will follow.”

Another school leader thought that smaller districts are more agile and therefore better suited to be the early adopters of a new curriculum. Once the curriculum can be shown to work in a smaller district, it can be spread to larger districts. Charter school administrators made the same argument.

“And for me, that’s where the grassroots effort for programs like this would start because the smaller school districts are the ones that to me have the quickest turnaround on being able to implement something that’s new.” (School Leader, Florida)

The case for the bottom-up approach

Respondents were equally supportive of taking a grassroots, bottom-up approach to math-civics dissemination. Respondents widely acknowledged that teachers often have substantial influence over

how—and whether—concepts are taught. School leaders indicated that they would be more likely to adopt math-civics concepts with strong teacher support, noting that teachers' perspectives often carry greater weight in curricular decisions than those of external participants.

"If a history teacher was saying, hey, I see a real need to make this an official part of the curriculum, I feel like that's who we would listen to, not an outside entity." (School leader, New York)

Teachers were also seen as trusted sources of information, and as such, several respondents saw them playing a key role in championing the curriculum and providing testimonials.

"You would want to have a number of teachers who are willing to speak to the value of the curriculum and who could potentially be the champions when the school or district rolls it out to more teachers and would be able to support other teachers and say, 'When I came across this particular issue with the curriculum, this is how I addressed it with my students'." (State leader, Massachusetts)

In addition, respondents also warned that top-down mandates without buy-in from teachers and school administrators would be unpopular and less likely to succeed. As a civics curriculum provider explained, *"if the principal doesn't care about whether it's happening in the classroom or not, it can really easily fall out of use."*

Respondents suggested reaching teachers and school administrators through channels they frequently use, including education conferences, professional organizations or unions, and social media.

"I would [do] social media and then vendors at your state conferences and teaching conferences; let teachers see it, let teachers get the buy-in and then teachers will bring things to me all the time." (School leader, Texas)

Other suggestions for bottom-up dissemination included partnering with parent groups, as well as community- and advocacy-based organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When mobilized, respondents perceived these groups to be powerful motivators of new initiatives.

Discussion

In the present Stage One of our study which took place between fall 2025 and spring 2026, we conducted interviews and focus groups with 123 study participants in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas). The goal was to learn about whether and how much participants—including teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state education leaders, and providers of math and civics curricula—may currently address student learning objectives at the intersection of math and civics, and if so, how. Results provide a cross-sector view of opportunities, challenges, and potential pathways for advancing integrated math and civics instruction (i.e., “*math-civics*”).

Opportunities

Our interviews and focus groups surfaced reasons for optimism that increased emphasis on topics at the intersection of math and civics is welcome, needed, and possible with the necessary structural supports. Many educators we spoke with had not previously considered math-civics topics, though when prompted to do so were supportive. Respondents highlighted the relevance of math-civics topics to students and expressed confidence that relevancy would translate into student engagement with learning. They also displayed enthusiasm for math-civics content and skills as good candidates to teach through applied learning approaches such as project-based and inquiry-based pedagogy, as well as interdisciplinary learning (e.g., math and civics educators co-teaching a curricular unit). Participants believe math-civics topics can be taught in a neutral way and communicated to parents in a way that would assuage potential concerns.

From a systemic perspective, our results indicated several key opportunities. First, growth in attention to math-civics will start from a low baseline, implying resources dedicated to scaling high-quality approaches could have a high return on investment. Second, there was no clear overwhelming preference for teaching math-civics in existing civics classes over math classes or vice versa. Results suggest a number of promising entry points including through elementary voting activities, middle school math and civics, and high school electives and Advanced Placement courses.

Considering the body of results in combination with our own expertise, for our proposed Stage 2 or our work, we recommend developing and piloting math-civics resources for middle school math classes. There are three main reasons for this recommendation: (1) it is possible to align math-civics to standards, (2) this content will provide much-needed relevancy to math instructions, which can improve student engagement, and (3) nationwide, all students take math every year, which is not the case for civics and implies math has broader reach. We could also support focusing our next stage of work on developing and piloting resources for civics courses, given results indicating how well math-civics courses fit topically into those classes.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Develop and pilot math-civics resources for middle school math classes

Our top priority for Stage Two: potential standards alignment, real-world relevance, and universal reach make middle-school math the highest-return starting point.

Also stemming from conversations with educators, a further recommendation is to integrate math-civics topics into core courses—not electives which may not reach the students who might benefit the most—in a way that aligns with state learning standards. Partnering with an established high-quality instructional materials curriculum provider of core math curriculum, already approved by their client districts, would be an efficient way to introduce math-civics lessons to districts.

Challenges and recommendations

Successfully harnessing the opportunities math-civics affords will require mitigating the challenges. Here we describe four challenges and provide respective recommendations for specific stakeholder groups.

1) Learning standards

While integrating math-civics lessons and units into existing core curriculum in a standards-aligned way is an opportunity, it is also a challenge. Respondents emphasized how critical standards are to the allocation of instructional time, and do not currently perceive math-civics topics as explicitly integrated into existing math or civics learning standards. This result indicates the need to both align new math-civics curriculum and instruction materials with existing standards and engage in efforts to update state and national standards to add math-civics concepts.

State education leaders should create space within existing math student learning standards for math-civics content. They should consider whether including math-civics content in state assessments would provide the leverage teachers need. States should participate in the state-level National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics in 2028—the first time the civics assessment will be representative at the state level—and advocate for the inclusion of math-civics concepts in the NAEP civics framework revision, which will serve as the assessment foundation starting in 2032.

Funders can also advocate for the inclusion of math-civics concepts in state and national math standards, as well as the NAEP civics framework revision.

2) Current political environment

While math-civics topics themselves may not be inherently biased, parent and community buy-in are critical for focused classroom attention.

District and school leaders should develop parent communication materials proactively, framing math-civics content as neutral, non-partisan mathematical literacy and civic preparation, and sharing them through letters and back-to-school parent nights. Developing materials for parents, community members, and school boards that explain the rationale and evidence base will help build institutional support.

As well, pursuing math-civics opportunities through established core curriculum providers offers a path into politically constrained states.

State leaders should explicitly incorporate “*neutral mathematical analysis*” framing into state communications about this content.

Curriculum providers should support partner districts by providing documentation of the neutrality of their materials using parent- and community-member facing language. District staff, school leaders, and teachers could then easily adapt and distribute this documentation to the community.

3) Teacher support needs

Teachers voiced lack of familiarity with math-civics concepts and how to teach them. They were clear that while they want to teach the concepts, they will need support. This means successful efforts to increase instructional focus on math-civics concepts will require sufficient funding to support development and provision of high-quality professional development and “*turnkey*” teaching-ready classroom materials.

Teachers can use math-civics examples such as districting, the Electoral College, or ranked-choice voting as applied examples when students ask, “*why does this math matter?*” When facilitating mock election activities, they can go a step further beyond providing the experience to explain the foundational mathematics. Rather than developing new materials from scratch, teachers should first seek out existing curriculum resources from established providers—if possible, ones already vetted by their own districts—

and connect with colleagues already teaching math-civics through education conferences and professional learning communities. Finally, teachers should advocate to their school leaders for the protected time and administrative support needed to sustain this work.

WHERE TO START

Ready-made resources already exist

Programs such as Citizen Math and Skew the Script already offer free, vetted lessons connecting math to real-world civic topics like gerrymandering and elections — a starting point before building anything from scratch.

School leaders should make math-civics integration a stated school priority rather than leaving it to individual teacher initiative, communicating clearly to staff that they value and support teaching of these concepts. They can create time structures—such as advisory periods, interdisciplinary blocks, or elective slots—that give teachers room to learn and then teach math-civics concepts. Identifying and supporting teacher champions who can model implementation for their peers will also help the approach take hold school-wide.

District leaders should commission or adopt a ready-to-use curriculum package, not expect teachers to build materials from scratch. They should also incorporate math-civics content into existing professional development structures.

State leaders should also coordinate with the network of curriculum providers already working in this space, many of whom are foundation-funded and seeking state partnerships.

Curriculum providers should develop “*implementation-ready*” math-civics packages—including lesson plans, pacing guides, teacher-facing notes, and aligned professional learning—requiring minimal adaptation. Packages should not require advanced math credentials to facilitate and should be possible to integrate into existing curriculum.

Funders should support the development of an implementation-ready curriculum package with aligned professional development as a near-term priority, since this is the resource gap respondents identify most clearly. They should fund a pilot study across a range of contexts to generate the outcome evidence the field needs. Supporting a coordinated network of early-adopter districts would help share learning and build momentum toward Stage Two.

4) Research

There is currently minimal research substantiating the use and efficacy of math-civics teaching and learning. Respondents agreed that research evidence of math-civics efficacy in classrooms is needed to justify the required time and resource investments. With expertise in both math and civics, **our USC-Wellesley team** is well-positioned to conduct the needed research.

Where resources allow, **districts** should also collect and share outcome data—describing engagement, civic knowledge, and math performance—to build the evidence base, ideally in partnership with internal district staff and/or external researchers.

In partnership with researchers, **curriculum providers** should prioritize building the evidence base, since outcome data is the strongest tool for convincing school boards and district leaders to adopt new lessons and units.

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Appendix A: Methodological Approach Details

We used a qualitative research design to explore participant perspectives on the opportunities, challenges, and implementation considerations associated with integrating mathematics and civics instruction ("*math-civics*") in K–12 education. Our goal was to capture perspectives from participants operating at multiple levels of the education system and across diverse policy and political contexts. To inform our study objectives, we collected data through a combination of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state education agency staff, and curriculum providers.

State Selection

We conducted our study in six states: California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas. These states provided geographic diversity and variation in educational policy environments, governance structures, and political contexts. We intended to capture a broad range of perspectives on the potential opportunities and challenges associated with implementing math-civics across different educational settings.

Sampling and Recruitment

We employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit participants with relevant expertise and experience. Participants included classroom teachers (math and social studies/civics), school leaders (including principals, vice principals, and instructional leaders), district leaders, state department of education staff, and math and civics curriculum providers.

A professional qualitative research recruitment firm secured participation from our classroom teacher and school leader respondents. To select district staff, for each of the six states we drew from publicly available information to create a list of all districts (public and charter) along with district leader names, roles, and email addresses. We then invited leaders from a random selection of districts within each state to participate. We stratified our sampling on district size, to achieve representation from each state's larger and smaller districts. Similarly, to the extent possible, we also harnessed publicly available data to create a list of math and social studies state education leader names, roles, and emails. As full state leader information was not always available online, we also sought help from our professional contacts to flesh out this list. Finally, we identified math and civics curriculum contacts through a combination of professional contacts and recommendations from others, a merge of convenience and snowball sampling.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of focus groups with classroom teachers and semi-structured interviews with all other participant groups. Focus groups allowed teachers to discuss instructional practices and implementation considerations, while interviews allowed for more in-depth exploration of perspectives among leadership and policy participants.

We conducted all interviews and focus groups remotely via Zoom. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes, while focus groups lasted approximately 60 minutes. We tailored interview and focus group protocols to each participant group while covering a common set of topics, including perceptions of math-civics, perceived benefits and challenges, implementation considerations, instructional fit, professional development needs, and opportunities for adoption and scaling.

We audio-recorded all sessions with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Teachers, school leaders, and district leaders received compensation for their participation.

Analytic Approach

We analyzed transcripts using thematic analysis. Our coding framework, developed through an iterative process, combined themes emerging from the data with concepts informed by the study's research questions. Dedoose qualitative analysis software supported coding and data management.

Analysis focused on identifying themes that cut across participant groups while also examining areas of divergence. We used a cross-participant comparative approach to explore similarities and differences in perspectives among teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state education agency staff, and curriculum providers. We paid particular attention to variation by participant role, school type, and state context. We present results thematically, with participant differences highlighted where they provide important insight into scaling opportunities and challenges.

Sample Description

The final sample included 106 participants across four educator participant groups representing six states—California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas: classroom teachers (n=59), school leaders (n=30), district leaders (n=11), and state education math and social studies leaders (n=6). Teachers taught elementary (n=24), middle (n=15), and high school (n=20) grade levels and included both mathematics (n=46) and civics/social studies (n=33) educators, with a few at the elementary level teaching both subjects. School leaders included principals, vice principals, and instructional leaders, with equal representation from each state. The sample was predominantly female across both teachers (41 of 59) and school leaders (24 of 30) and reflected a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The teacher sample was predominantly white (n = 34, 58%), with smaller proportions identifying as Hispanic (n = 11, 19%), African American (n = 10, 17%), Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 3, 5%), or another race/ethnicity (n = 1, 2%). Teachers taught across a variety of grade levels: 24 are elementary teachers (41%), 15 are middle school teachers (25%), and 20 are high school teachers (34%). 46 of the teachers cite teaching math (78%) in their classrooms, while 33 cite teaching civics/social studies (56%), with some overlap especially among teachers in elementary grades.

Our sample also included 30 school leaders. Female school leaders composed the majority of this sample (24 female, 6 male). The school leader sample was predominantly White (n = 18, 60%), with smaller proportions identifying as Hispanic (n = 6, 20%), African American (n = 4, 13%), Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 1, 3%), or another race/ethnicity (n = 1, 3%). The sample was evenly distributed across the six study states, with five school leaders recruited from each state. Although most school leader respondents served exclusively in administrative roles, seven (23%) also reported teaching either mathematics or civics/social studies.

We also interviewed 17 curriculum providers, including 11 focused primarily on mathematics education and 6 on civics education, gaining perspectives from both content areas on the opportunities and challenges associated with math-civics integration. Curriculum providers were not limited to the six sample states.

We interviewed 11 district leaders from California (n=3), Florida (n=2), Illinois (n=3), Massachusetts (n=2), and Texas (n=1). We were unable to recruit any district leaders from New York. District leader roles included superintendent, assistant superintendent, and curriculum directors/specialists for both math and social studies. Finally, we interviewed six state leaders who held leadership positions in the State Education Departments of New York (n=3), California (n=1), Massachusetts (n=1), and Texas (n=1). We were unable to recruit state leaders from Florida and Illinois.

Table A1: Counts and demographic characteristics of study participants by respondent type.

	Teachers	School Leaders	District Leaders	State Leaders	Curriculum Providers	Total
State						
TX	18	5	1	1	NA	25
CA	12	5	3	1	NA	21
IL	6	5	3	0	NA	14
FL	8	5	2	0	NA	15
MA	7	5	2	1	NA	15
NY	8	5	0	3	NA	16
Gender						
Male	18	6	NA	NA	NA	24
Female	41	24	NA	NA	NA	65
Race / Ethnicity						
Asian/ Pacific Islander	3	1	NA	NA	NA	4
Black or African American	10	4	NA	NA	NA	14
Hispanic or Latino	11	6	NA	NA	NA	17
White	34	18	NA	NA	NA	52
Other	1	1	NA	NA	NA	2

Appendix B: Interview and focus group protocols

B.1 Teacher Focus Group Protocol

IN ADVANCE OF THE FOCUS GROUP

Teachers were sent the following links to provide context for the discussion. They were not required to review them in advance of the focus group.

<https://sites.google.com/wellesley.edu/math-politics-modules/>
<https://mathematics-democracy-institute.org/education-resources/>

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. Please begin by going around the room and telling me what subject(s), you teach, to which grade level(s), how long you've been teaching in general, and how long in your current school?
2. Before today, have you heard of, or thought about, the idea of explicitly teaching math concepts that support civics learning?

Now, I would like us to do a zoom poll to get a sense of everyone's familiarity with the concepts we're discussing today. Again, we mean the mathematical foundations of democracy, topics such as rank-choice voting, gerrymandering, the electoral college, allocation of congressional representatives, and reading public opinion data.

ZOOM POLL

1. How comfortable are you teaching about topics such as gerrymandering, the electoral college, allocation of congressional representatives, alternative voting methods like ranked choice voting, and reading public opinion data?
 - Very comfortable
 - Somewhat comfortable
 - Not very comfortable
 - Not at all comfortable
2. Do you currently teach any of these concepts to your students?
 - Yes
 - No

Great, thanks everyone.

[IF ANY SAID THEY DO] For those who said you do currently teach mathematical foundations of

democracy. Can you tell us a bit about what this looks like?

- In which grade levels do you teach this?
- In which courses?
- Using which curriculum—or do you develop your own?
- Do you collaborate with other teachers? If not, why not?
- What is the reason you started teaching this?

I see from your responses that most of you said No to the question about whether you're currently teaching these subjects. I want to dig into this issue a bit more:

- To what extent do you see value in teaching the mathematical underpinnings of democratic processes and concepts?
- What comes to mind when you hear the idea of teaching the mathematics behind democratic processes, like voting systems or representation?
- What benefits or concerns would you have about teaching the mathematical foundations of democratic systems in your classroom?
- How interested would you be in teaching the mathematical foundations of democratic processes?
- In which class and grade level would this curriculum be appropriate?
- What do you think you, as a teacher, would need in terms of resources to start teaching these topics and skills?

ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO TEACHING MATH-CIVICS

3. What do you think are the biggest barriers to teaching math-civics concepts related to?
 - Curriculum/instructional materials
 - Teacher capacity and interest
 - Schools
 - Districts
 - Parents and communities
 - States
 - Other
4. In the grand scheme of things, should effort go into advocating for more math+civics education in k-12 given the universe of constraints and competing priorities teachers face?

SCALING OF MATH-CIVICS

5. To encourage the teaching of the mathematical foundations of democracy to be widespread, what would be the top three necessary conditions to be in place?
6. If your school decided most or all math and civics teachers should teach math-civics concepts to students, what steps would you take to meet this requirement?
7. If you wanted to learn more about teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy, how would you learn about this (outside of this study)?
 - Conferences? If so, which?
 - Publications? If so, which?
 - Word-of-mouth? If so, from whom?

FINAL QUESTIONS

8. Is there anything we haven't asked you about that you would like to tell us, specifically related to teaching students about the mathematical foundations of democracy?

B.2 School Leader Interview Protocol

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. Can you tell me about your role as a school leader, and for how long you have been at your organization, in this role and/or in other roles?
2. Did you previously teach in the classroom? If yes, which subject(s) and grade level(s)?

INTRODUCTION

3. Before now, have you heard of, or thought about, the idea of explicitly teaching math concepts that support civics learning? I'm talking about teaching students fundamental mathematical concepts that underlie commonly taught civics concepts like ranked choice voting, gerrymandering, the electoral college, things like this? Not just the civics part of the topic, but some level of the math at its core (not necessarily complicated math, though the mathematical intuition).
4. Do you think schools are currently teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy in a way that is tied to the civics concepts?
 - If yes, do you think they are doing so sufficiently? What more could be done?
 - If not, what makes you answer no – what are you seeing?
5. How important do you think it is for student learning standards to address, and for teachers to have the necessary supports, at this intersection?
6. Where do you think these topics should be included – more in math classes, more in civics classes, or somewhere else?
 - In what grade bands should these concepts be taught?

MATERIALS/PROGRAMMING

7. Does your district or school currently provide curriculum (could be example problems, lessons, units—doesn't have to be a full-curriculum or a full unit), instructional materials, professional learning supports or other tools that support teaching of the mathematical foundations of democracy?
 - If not, have you ever considered providing this type of curriculum? What would it take for that to happen?
 - If yes, what do you provide?
 - For which educators (individual math or civics teachers, school leaders, districts, afterschool programs)?
 - Why (and when) did your district decide to develop these resources?
8. How would you characterize the current demand for these resources—high, low, or somewhere in between?

ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO TEACHING MATH-CIVICS

9. What do you like about any existing math+civics curriculum that your school/district creates/provides or that you're aware of?
 - What don't you like about them?
10. What would lead to this curriculum getting prioritized?
11. What are the resources you need to implement this curriculum?
12. Do you think teachers would be supportive of adopting these types of materials?
 - Social studies teachers, math teachers, or both?
13. What might make it hard for them to do so? What might make it easier for them to do so?
14. What policies, priorities, or constraints in schools make it easier or harder for schools to adopt curriculum and materials about teaching math-civics concepts?
 - What about at the district level?
 - What about for teachers themselves?
15. To what extent do you think parents or the broader community are aware of topics at the intersection of math and civics? What kinds of support or pushback have you observed, or might you anticipate?
16. How do state [standards, testing requirements, policy environments, budget issues – whatever is relevant here] affect the ability to teach math-civics concepts either positively or negatively?
17. Are there any other barriers—beyond those we've discussed—that you think are important to acknowledge?

SCALING OF MATH-CIVICS

18. Do you think teaching the mathematical foundations of civics should be a core part of what students learn in school?
 - If yes: What conditions would need to be in place for this to happen?

- If not, why not?

This question essentially gets at: Some people believe that K-12 schools really do not address the intersection of math-civics concepts, and there are little to no supports for doing so. There is a belief that developing students' conceptual and mathematical understanding of these civics concepts (like gerrymandering and the electoral college) would strengthen U.S. democracy down the road. Do you agree/disagree, and why?

19. Of those conditions, which do you see as the most important or highest priority?
20. If your school decided to provide a math-civics curriculum for your teachers, what steps would you take to accomplish this objective?
21. What is the best way for us to get the word out to school leaders about math-civics value and supporting resources?
 - Conferences? If so, which?
 - Publications? If so, which?
 - Word-of-mouth? If so, from whom?

FINAL QUESTIONS

22. Is there anything we haven't asked you about that you would like to tell us, specifically related to teaching students about the mathematical foundations of democracy?

B.3 District Leader Interview Protocol

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. Can you tell me about your role as a district leader, and for how long you have been at your organization, in this role and/or in other roles?

INTRODUCTION

2. Before now, have you heard of, or thought about, the idea of explicitly teaching math concepts that support civics learning? I'm talking about teaching students fundamental mathematical concepts that underlie commonly taught civics concepts like ranked choice voting, gerrymandering, the electoral college, things like this? Not just the civics part of the topic, but some level of the math at its core (not necessarily complicated math, though the mathematical intuition).
3. Do you think schools are currently teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy in a way that is tied to the civics concepts?
 - If yes, do you think they are doing so sufficiently? What more could be done?
 - If not, what makes you answer no – what are you seeing?
4. How important do you think it is for student learning standards to address, and for teachers to have the necessary supports, at this intersection?

5. Where do you think these topics should be included – more in math classes, more in civics classes, or somewhere else?

- In what grade bands should these concepts be taught?

MATERIALS/PROGRAMMING

6. Does your district currently provide curriculum (could be example problems, lessons, units—doesn't have to be a full-curriculum or a full unit), instructional materials, professional learning supports or other tools that support teaching of the mathematical foundations of democracy?

- If not, have you ever considered providing this type of curriculum? What would it take for that to happen?
- If yes, what do you provide?
 - For which educators (individual math or civics teachers, school leaders, districts, afterschool programs)?
 - Why (and when) did your district decide to develop these resources?

7. How would you characterize the current demand for these resources—high, low, or somewhere in between?

ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO TEACHING MATH-CIVICS

8. What do you like about any existing math+civics curriculum that your district creates/provides or that you're aware of?

- What don't you like about them?

9. Do you think teachers would be supportive of adopting these types of materials?

- Social studies teachers, math teachers, or both?

10. What might make it hard for them to do so? What might make it easier for them to do so?

11. What policies, priorities, or constraints in schools make it easier or harder for schools to adopt curriculum and materials about teaching math-civics concepts?

- What about at the district level?
- What about for teachers themselves?

12. To what extent do you think parents or the broader community are aware of topics at the intersection of math and civics? What kinds of support or pushback have you observed, or might you anticipate?

13. How do state [standards, testing requirements, policy environments, budget issues – whatever is relevant here] affect the ability to teach math-civics concepts either positively or negatively?

14. Are there any other barriers—beyond those we've discussed—that you think are important to acknowledge?

SCALING OF MATH-CIVICS

15. Do you think teaching the mathematical foundations of civics should be a core part of what students learn in school?

- If yes: What conditions would need to be in place for this to happen?
- If not, why not?

This question essentially gets at: Some people believe that K-12 schools really do not address the intersection of math-civics concepts, and there are little to no supports for doing so. There is a belief that developing students' conceptual and mathematical understanding of these civics concepts (like gerrymandering and the electoral college) would strengthen U.S. democracy down the road. Do you agree/disagree, and why?

16. Of those conditions, which do you see as the most important or highest priority?

17. If the district decided to provide a math-civics curriculum for your schools, what steps would you take to accomplish this objective?

18. If you wanted to learn more about teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy, how would you learn about this?

- Conferences? If so, which?
- Publications? If so, which?
- Word-of-mouth? If so, from whom?

FINAL QUESTIONS

19. Is there anything we haven't asked you about that you would like to tell us, specifically related to teaching students about the mathematical foundations of democracy?

B.4 State Leader Interview Protocol

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. Can you tell me about your role as a state department of education leader, and for how long you have been at your organization, in this role and/or in other roles?
2. Did you previously teach in the classroom? If yes, which subject(s) and grade level(s)?

INTRODUCTION

3. Before now, have you heard of, or thought about, the idea of explicitly teaching math concepts that support civics learning? I'm talking about teaching students fundamental mathematical concepts that underlie commonly taught civics concepts like gerrymandering, the electoral college, ranked-choice voting, things like this? Not just the civics part of the topic, but some level of the math at its core (not necessarily complicated math, though the mathematical intuition).
4. Do you think schools are currently teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy in a way that is tied to the civics concepts?
 - If yes, do you think they are doing so sufficiently? What more could be done?
 - If not, what makes you answer no – what are you seeing?

5. How important do you think it is for student learning standards to address, and for teachers to have the necessary supports, at this intersection?
6. Where do you think these topics should be included – more in math classes, more in civics classes, or somewhere else?

- In what grade bands should these concepts be taught?

MATERIALS/PROGRAMMING

7. Does your state currently provide curriculum (could be example problems, lessons, units—doesn't have to be a full-curriculum or a full unit), instructional materials, professional learning supports or other tools that support teaching of the mathematical foundations of democracy?
 - If not, have you ever considered providing this type of curriculum? What would it take for that to happen?
 - If yes, what do you provide?
 - For which educators (individual math or civics teachers, school leaders, districts, afterschool programs)?
 - Why (and when) did your state decide to develop these resources?
8. How would you characterize the current demand for these resources—high, low, or somewhere in between?

ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO TEACHING MATH-CIVICS

9. What do you like about any existing math+civics curriculum that your state creates/provides or that you're aware of?
 - What don't you like about them?
10. What would lead to this curriculum getting prioritized?
11. What are the resources you need to implement this curriculum?
12. Do you think teachers would be supportive of adopting these types of materials?
 - Social studies teachers, math teachers, or both?
13. What might make it hard for them to do so? What might make it easier for them to do so?
14. What policies, priorities, or constraints in schools make it easier or harder for schools to adopt curriculum and materials about teaching math-civics concepts?
 - What about at the district level?
 - What about for teachers themselves?
15. To what extent do you think parents or the broader community are aware of topics at the intersection of math and civics? What kinds of support or pushback have you observed, or might you anticipate?
16. How do state [standards, testing requirements, policy environments, budget issues – whatever is relevant here] affect the ability to teach math-civics concepts either positively or negatively?

17. Are there any other barriers—beyond those we’ve discussed—that you think are important to acknowledge?

SCALING OF MATH-CIVICS

18. Do you think teaching the mathematical foundations of civics should be a core part of what students learn in school?

- If yes: What conditions would need to be in place for this to happen?
- If not, why not?

This question essentially gets at: Some people believe that K-12 schools really do not address the intersection of math-civics concepts, and there are little to no supports for doing so. There is a belief that developing students’ conceptual and mathematical understanding of these civics concepts (like gerrymandering and the electoral college) would strengthen U.S. democracy down the road. Do you agree/disagree, and why?

19. Of those conditions, which do you see as the most important or highest priority?

20. If your state decided to provide a math-civics curriculum for your teachers, what steps would you take to accomplish this objective?

21. What is the best way for us to get the word out to state leaders about math-civics value and supporting resources?

- Conferences? If so, which?
- Publications? If so, which?
- Word-of-mouth? If so, from whom?

FINAL QUESTIONS

22. Is there anything we haven’t asked you about that you would like to tell us, specifically related to teaching students about the mathematical foundations of democracy?

B.5 Curriculum Provider Interview Protocol

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

1. What kind of supports for teachers does your organization provide? For example, core curriculum, supplementary curriculum, professional learning, combination of supports, other?
2. Does your organization primarily provide these supports directly to teachers, or through contracts with schools, districts, state departments of education?
3. Does your organization primarily provide these supports to teachers nationwide or are you focused in specific states (and if the latter, which states)?
4. Can you tell me about your role at [provider organization] and for how long you have been at your organization, in this role and/or in other roles?

INTRODUCTION

5. Before now, have you heard of, or thought about, the idea of explicitly teaching math concepts that support civics learning? I'm talking about teaching students fundamental mathematical concepts that underlie commonly taught civics concepts like ranked choice voting, gerrymandering, the electoral college, things like this? Not just the civics part of the topic, but some level of the math at its core (not necessarily complicated math, though the mathematical intuition).
6. Do you think schools are currently teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy in a way that is tied to the civics concepts?
 - If yes, do you think they are doing so sufficiently? What more could be done?
 - If not, what makes you answer no – what are you seeing?
7. How important do you think it is for schools to have curriculum at this intersection?
8. Where do you think these topics should be included – more in math classes, more in civics classes, or somewhere else?
 1. In what grade bands should these concepts be taught?

PROVIDER PROGRAMMING

9. Does your organization currently provide curriculum (could be example problems, lessons, units—doesn't have to be a full-curriculum or a full unit), instructional materials, professional learning supports or other tools that support teaching of the mathematical foundations of democracy?
 - If not, have you ever considered developing this type of curriculum? What would it take for that to happen?
 - If yes, what do you provide?
 - For which educators (individual math or civics teachers, school leaders, districts, afterschool programs)?
10. Why (and when) did your organization decide to develop these resources?
11. How would you characterize the current demand for these resources—high, low, or somewhere in between?

ENABLERS OF AND BARRIERS TO TEACHING MATH-CIVICS

12. What do you like about any existing math+civics curriculum that your organization creates/provides or that you're aware of?
 - What don't you like about them?
13. Do you think teachers would be supportive of adopting these types of materials?
 - Social studies teachers, math teachers, or both?
14. What might make it hard for them to do so? What might make it easier for them to do so?
15. What policies, priorities, or constraints in schools make it easier or harder for schools to adopt curriculum and materials about teaching math-civics concepts?
 - What about at the district level?

- What about for teachers themselves?
16. To what extent do you think parents or the broader community are aware of topics at the intersection of math and civics? What kinds of support or pushback have you observed, or might you anticipate?
17. How do state [standards, testing requirements, policy environments, budget issues – whatever is relevant here] affect the ability to teach math-civics concepts either positively or negatively?
18. Are there any other barriers—beyond those we’ve discussed—that you think are important to acknowledge?

SCALING OF MATH-CIVICS

19. Do you think teaching the mathematical foundations of civics should be a core part of what students learn in school?
- If yes: What conditions would need to be in place for this to happen?
 - If not, why not?

This question essentially gets at: Some people believe that K-12 schools really do not address the intersection of math-civics concepts, and there are little to no supports for doing so. There is a belief that developing students’ conceptual and mathematical understanding of these civics concepts (like gerrymandering and the electoral college) would strengthen U.S. democracy down the road. Do you agree/disagree, and why?

20. Of those conditions, which do you see as the most important or highest priority?
21. If [provider organization] decided to sell a math-civics curriculum to more schools, districts and states nationwide, what steps would you take to accomplish this objective?
22. If you wanted to learn more about teaching the mathematical foundations of democracy, how would you learn about this?
- Conferences? If so, which?
 - Publications? If so, which?
 - Word-of-mouth? If so, from whom?

FINAL QUESTIONS

23. After we interview math and civics curriculum providers, we are going to interview and hold focus groups with teachers, principals, district staff, and state education department leaders in six states.
- Is there anything in particular you think we should ask teachers about this topic?
 - Anything in particular you think we should ask school and district leaders about this topic?
 - Are there any particular states that you think would be really important to include in our sample, and why those?
24. Is there anything we haven’t asked you about that you would like to tell us, specifically related to teaching students about the mathematical foundations of democracy?

Appendix C: K-12 Math and Civics Curriculum provider profiles

Table C1: Comparison of 17 organizations across math and civics curriculum, July 2026

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Supplemen- tary	Current Program Offerings
Carnegie Learning	Math	1998 (spun out of Carnegie Mellon University research)	Use AI and cognitive science to deliver personalized, adaptive instruction that helps every student succeed in math (and, more recently, literacy and world languages).	For-profit company. Backed over time by Gates Foundation (early), Accelerate US, and private-equity investors Madison Dearborn Partners and CIP Capital (acquired the company in 2018); merged with EMC School & Mondo Publishing in 2018.	More than 5.5 million students/educators across all 50 states and Canada; recent state approvals in Texas (MATHia+MATHstream, Dec. 2025) and Florida (world languages).	Core + Supplemen- tary	K-12 core math solutions (Elementary, Middle/High School Math), AI-powered adaptive supplement MATHia and MATHia Adventure, MATHstream video support, plus literacy, world-language, high-dosage tutoring, and professional-learning services.
Citizen Math	Math	~2009, originally launched as Mathalicious (founded by Karim Ani); rebranded Citizen Math around 2021	Use real-world, relevant problems to help students see math as a lens for engaging rationally and respectfully with the world around them.	For-profit LLC; lessons made free for all users. Supported by a U.S. Dept. of Education (OESE) research grant funding a WestEd/AIR randomized controlled trial, plus donations.	More than 4,000 teachers reached over 200,000 students in the past year; used by individual teachers and districts nationwide.	Supplemen- tary	Free "off-the-shelf" supplemental lessons for grades 6-8, Algebra 1, and Algebra 2, built around real-world questions, with interactive tools, handouts, and teacher supports; subject of a federally funded efficacy study (2018 RCT showed a 0.086 SD score gain).
Data Science 4 Everyone	Math (Data Science)	2019 (coalition launched following a 2019 Freakonomics podcast); incubated at the	Catalyze the adoption of data science as a fundamental component of K-12 education nationwide.	Nonprofit coalition; funded by Citadel CEO Ken Griffin and Schmidt Futures, with backing from figures including Arne Duncan, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Eric Schmidt.	A coalition of nearly 3,000 members; state partners include Virginia, Arkansas, Indiana, and Utah; member commitments reportedly reach 5 million students, 100,000 teachers, and 8,000+ districts.	Not a curriculum provider (policy/coalition-building)	Not a curriculum publisher itself — a national coalition and resource center that advocates for data science standards and course pathways, supports states and districts (e.g., Khan Lab School) piloting data science content, and organizes policy champions and commitments across government, industry, and education.

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Suppleme ntary	Current Program Offerings
		University of Chicago Center for RISC					
Goblins	Math	2024	Make it feel like every classroom has "30 teachers" by giving each student real-time, individualized feedback on their math reasoning.	For-profit company; has raised about \$1M from GoAhead Ventures, Coherence Fund, the Gates Foundation, New Era Ventures, and StartX.	Deployed in large U.S. districts including Baltimore County (MD), Plano (TX), and Deer Valley (AZ).	Suppleme ntary	AI-powered math platform where students speak and draw their reasoning on any device; the AI diagnoses the "why" behind mistakes and gives instant conceptual feedback. Teachers can assign thousands of state- and curriculum-aligned problems or upload their own.
Great Minds	Math	2007 (originally Common Core, Inc., founded by Lynne Munson)	Help teachers unlock every student's potential through research-based, high-quality, content-rich curricula.	Nonprofit; revenue from state/district curriculum contracts and sales (originated with a \$14M federally funded NY state contract for EngageNY), plus foundation grants (e.g., \$4.5M Gates Foundation grant for Eureka Math ² research).	Was used by a majority of elementary teachers in Common Core states by 2015; current district partners include California, Louisiana, Nebraska, and Oakland USD, among many others nationwide.	Core	PreK-12 core math curriculum (Eureka Math / Eureka Math ²), alongside Wit & Wisdom (K-8 ELA) and PhD Science; includes extensive professional development and implementation support.
Illustrative Mathematics	Math	2011 (University of Arizona project); independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit since 2013	Create a world where learners know, use, and enjoy mathematics.	Nonprofit; foundation grants from the Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Heising-Simons Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation (~\$18.8M annual income); also earns revenue through certified distribution partners.	Millions of students and hundreds of thousands of teachers; state adoptions in New Mexico and Maryland, and district adoptions including the School District of Philadelphia.	Core	Free, open (CC BY-licensed) K-12 math curriculum (IM 6-8, IM 9-12, and PreK-5) distributed commercially in enhanced form via IM Certified partners Imagine Learning, Kendall Hunt, and Kiddom, with embedded professional learning.
Just Equations	Math (Policy/Equity)	~2015-2016, as a project of The Opportunity Institute,	Advance evidence-based policies and strategies that help all students develop the quantitative skills needed for success in college and beyond,	Nonprofit initiative; funded by the College Futures Foundation and the Gates Foundation.	Works with state systems (California, Georgia, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah) and colleges (e.g., Citrus College, Pasadena City College, San Diego State	Not a curriculum provider (research/policy institute)	A policy and research institute, not a classroom curriculum — publishes reports (e.g., "Branching Out," "Degrees of Freedom," "Solving for Equity in Practice") and advocates for diversified, equitable math pathways from high school through college.

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Suppleme ntary	Current Program Offerings
		founded by Pamela Burdman (former Hewlett Foundation program officer)	reconceptualizing math's role in educational equity.		University) on math-pathway policy redesign.		
Khan Academy	Math	2006 (videos posted to YouTube by Sal Khan); incorporated as a nonprofit in 2008	Provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere.	Nonprofit, funded through philanthropic donations, including from the Gates Foundation, Google, Bank of America, the Amgen Foundation, Ann and John Doerr, the Musk Foundation, Reed Hastings, and the Overdeck Family Foundation, among others.	More than 18 million learners monthly in 190+ countries and 40+ languages; 200,000+ educators use its free teacher tools; partners include NASA, MoMA, and MIT.	Supplementary (used as core by some districts via blended-learning partnerships)	Free K-12+ instructional videos and adaptive practice exercises spanning math, science, and humanities, plus the Khanmigo AI tutor (free for U.S. teachers). Now hosts Illustrative Mathematics-aligned courses (grades 6-8, Algebra 1) with new Math 1, AP Precalculus, and TEKS Statistics/Financial Math courses rolling out for 2026.
PBLWorks	Math	1987 (as the Buck Institute for Education); rebranded PBLWorks in 2019	Ensure all students, especially Black and Brown students, engage in high-quality Project Based Learning to deepen learning and achieve success in college, career, and life.	Nonprofit; funded in part by the original Buck Trust (~\$800K/year), earned revenue from workshops, and grants such as a \$2.9M Bezos Family Foundation grant to design a PBL-based social studies/civics curriculum.	Has trained 190,000+ teachers and leaders, supported 5,800+ schools, and partnered with 60+ districts for system-wide change, across all 50 states and internationally.	Supplementary	Not a packaged curriculum but a professional-learning organization: 60+ workshops and services (individual, school-wide, and district-wide) built on the Gold Standard PBL model, plus a PBL World conference and resource library spanning subjects including math.
Skew the Script	Math	2019-2020 (created by high school teacher Dashiell Young-Saver in San Antonio,	Improve engagement and achievement in math — especially among underserved students — with relevant, real-world lessons that build critical, civic-minded thinkers.	Nonprofit; supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and American Endowment Foundation, among others (~\$1.6M total revenue, 2025).	Thousands of teachers nationwide use the free lessons; exact district count not publicly reported.	Supplementary	Free lessons for Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and AP Statistics built around socially relevant topics (gerrymandering, sports, medicine, online dating); a Harvard research group found the AP Stats curriculum causally boosted exam pass rates 10-11 percentage points.

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Suppleme ntary	Current Program Offerings
		TX); tax-exempt 501(c)(3) since February 2021					
YouCubed	Math	2013 (Stanford Graduate School of Education, co-founded by Jo Boaler and Cathy Williams)	Give teachers, parents, and students research-based resources and ideas to inspire and excite students about mathematics, grounded in growth-mindset and brain research.	Housed at Stanford GSE; historically supported in part by the Valhalla Foundation (over \$560K in 2022-2023; funding ended 2024), plus revenue from paid teacher professional-learning courses.	About 500,000 teachers visit the site monthly; dozens of schools and districts nationwide run YouCubed-model math summer camps.	Suppleme ntary	Free K-12 math tasks and "Mindset Mathematics" resources, plus paid professional-learning courses (Mathematical Mindsets, Explorations in Data Science, Teaching the Summer Camp Curriculum) and district partnerships; trains educators to run YouCubed-model summer camps shown to boost math achievement.
Democratic Knowledge Project	Civics	2008; joined Harvard's Edmond & Lily Safra Center for Ethics in 2015 under Danielle Allen	Equip K-16 students with the knowledge and skills for informed participation in a healthy constitutional democracy.	Harvard-based initiative; supported by grants including the MacArthur Foundation and Lucas Education Research.	Piloted in 35+ Massachusetts schools since 2019, with "DKP Launch" aiming to reach 8th graders statewide in Massachusetts.	Core	Free, open-source, year-long "Civic Engagement in Our Democracy" 8th-grade curriculum aligned to Massachusetts standards (including a student-led civics project requirement), a media literacy module, and educator professional development.
Digital Inquiry Group	Civics	2002 as the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG); spun out as the independent nonprofit Digital Inquiry	Help students "read like historians" and think critically about the flood of information they encounter, preparing them for informed citizenship.	Nonprofit; historically funded by a \$7.1M U.S. Dept. of Education contract, a \$1M Google.org grant, and ongoing support from Stanford Impact Labs.	Materials used by teachers nationwide, including partnerships with state agencies (e.g., Colorado Dept. of Education) and the Civics Renewal Network.	Suppleme ntary	Free lesson libraries — Civic Online Reasoning (30 lessons teaching fact-checking/lateral-reading skills) and Reading Like a Historian (160+ primary-source history lessons) — plus assessments and teacher training.

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Suppleme ntary	Current Program Offerings
		Group in January 2024					
Generation Citizen	Civics	2009- 2010 (founded by Scott Warren while a student at Brown University)	Build an education movement that equips and inspires young people to transform democracy toward greater equity in representation and outcomes.	Nonprofit; funders include the Ford Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Bezos Family Foundation, New York Community Trust, United Airlines, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.	184 schools and about 35,500 students across California, Connecticut, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Washington State.	Suppleme ntary	"Action civics" curriculum delivered via teacher training/coaching inside existing classrooms; students use the "Advocacy Hourglass" to identify a community issue and take action on it, culminating in a civic action project.
iCivics	Civics	2009 (founded by retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day) O'Connor)	Ensure every student receives a high-quality, nonpartisan civic education and becomes engaged in — and beyond — the classroom.	Nonprofit; supported by the Gates Foundation, MacArthur Foundation (including a \$750K MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions), NEH/Dept. of Education grants, and private donations.	More than 60,000 educators (over 40% of middle school social studies teachers) reach 6+ million students annually in all 50 states and internationally.	Core + Suppleme ntary	The nation's most widely used civics curriculum: 20+ web/mobile games (LawCraft, Counties Work, NewsFeed Defenders, etc.), a K-5 "Private i" curriculum, an 8th-grade scope & sequence, a new middle-school U.S. History I curriculum, and a Civics Projects Workbook.
Mikva Challenge	Civics	1998 (piloted with an all- volunteer staff in four Chicago schools)	Develop empowered, informed, and active youth citizens who promote a just and equitable society, rooted in the belief that youth voice matters.	Nonprofit; funders include the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Bezos Family Foundation, Tillotson Foundation, NH Democracy Fund, and Jameson Foundation.	Impacts over 100,000 youth nationwide annually, through sites/chapters in Chicago, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Madison, Salinas, New Hampshire, and other communities.	Suppleme ntary	Project-based "Issues to Action" civic- engagement curriculum, including Project Soapbox (student public speeches on community issues, culminating in "Soapbox Nation"), youth councils, and a Center for Civics offering professional development and a curriculum platform.
Street Law	Civics	1972 (developed by law students at Georgetow n University)	Empower people in classrooms and communities with the civic and legal knowledge and skills they need to build civic agency, advance justice, and foster democratic culture.	Nonprofit (~\$2.5M revenue, FY2025); supported by grants (e.g., the \$200K Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics Award) and partnerships with law firms	High school law course/textbook adopted by hundreds of school districts coast-to-coast, plus international programs.	Core + Suppleme ntary	A high school elective law course and textbook adopted nationwide; a free resource library (800+ items) including the Legal Life Skills 20- lesson library, the "Rule of Law for All" curriculum, a Classroom Guide to Mock Trials, and Socratic Seminars.

Organization	Subject	Inception	Mission	Funding Sources	Clients	Core / Suppleme ntary	Current Program Offerings
		Law Center)		and corporate legal departments.			

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