

MINNESOTA Journal

A PUBLIC POLICY MONTHLY FROM THE CITIZENS LEAGUE

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At Civics Incorporated Gen-Xers buck stereotypes

Members practice civic skills where they live, work and worship

by Amy Brendmoen

A young Twin Cities woman named Lanni Harris had a great job with a local public relations firm. During her employment, she noticed that the company used an astonishing amount of office paper in its quick-paced day-to-day operations. From an environmental perspective, Lanni was dismayed. She wished that she could find a way to encourage her company to consume less, but she realized that changing its paper pitching ways would take more than the simple stroke of a No. 2 pencil. So she shook her head unhappily at the mountains of paper poking out of the bins and didn't know what to do...

Now, this story actually has a happy ending. But it isn't because our charming heroine burst through the CEO's door armed with a power-point presentation about deforestation. It's because Lanni joined Civics Incorporated, a small, local organization that is training and coaching the next generation of civic leaders in Minnesota.

Civics Incorporated was founded in 1994 when a group of young adults began meeting to discuss the state of their state, their country and their world. This group, made up primarily of twenty-somethings, wanted to buck some of the "Generation X" stereotypes. They wanted to make changes—real, sustainable, meaningful changes—to the broken institutions that they saw all around them.

Through experimentation and discussion, they realized that national level politics was not the best place to start, and that creating new volunteering activities wasn't either. They also realized that as young adults they needed to gain some credibility before their voices would be heard. They determined that what they really wanted to do was to learn how to do their ongoing work better.

They concluded that to make a significant difference *they would need to impact the places where they were already invested*—their workplaces, their communities, their places of worship, their volunteer groups—places where they were self-interested.

The group of young leaders found inspiration in locally designed theories from Harry Boyte, and especially from Peg Michels, and modified them to "fit" young adults. Using this modified framework, the group became Civics Incorporated. The plan: to build a next generation of civic leaders by arming young adults with skills to incorporate civic practices into their work and community life and by providing a strong network to back their efforts. The method: a formal education seminar to teach and practice civic skills followed by organized monthly meetings that reinforce the seminar's lessons and provide peer coaching on member's individual work plans.

People often think of civic engagement in terms of voting and volunteering. In Civics Incorporated, this definition falls short. Members view civic engagement as practicing democracy in all areas of life. By integrating civic values into all of our institutions (family, social, religious, workplace, and community) practicing citizenship becomes a daily (perhaps hourly) event. In an interview with the *National Civic Review*, Civics Incorporated board member Joel Spoonheim aptly said, "In a consumerist nation, the ability of citizens to produce solutions to shared problems is weakened by lack of practice. Civic engagement is about helping citizens recognize their authority, learn the skills to create change, and organize a base with others who share a common vision."

So how does all of this big thinking relate to

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Educate students to become active, informed citizens

by Shane Weinand

The United States is alone among modern nations to be borne of shared ideals—that human liberty is paramount, that citizens are capable of self governance and that the pursuit of common welfare is essential for a healthy society. We have placed the responsibility of building communities, making crucial public policy decisions and generally guarding the common welfare in the hands of our capable citizens. While noble in its aim, this vision for self governance requires a great deal from citizens. It requires citizens who are active, informed and capable of discerning the complex information that populates a free society. Self governance also requires a sense of personal responsibility for making a contribution to enhance the common welfare of the collective. It requires civic leaders.

Civic leaders, however, are not born as such. Instead, the charge of bringing the vision for self governance to an operational state falls largely on the shoulders of our education system. A strong and healthy society requires a system of education that answers the challenge of fostering active, informed citizens that are equal to the task of self governance. Thomas Jefferson uttered these timeless words in his support of founding our public education system—a lasting institution that provides education for all of our society's citizens:

"I know no safe depositary of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education." —Thomas Jefferson, 1820.

Minnesota has been a perennial leader in public education. Our public schools consistently rank at or near the top in the nation, and Minnesota has pioneered educational innovations such as open enrollment, post secondary enrollment options and charter schools. Even Minnesota, however, is at an educational crossroads. The latest Citizens League report on civic engagement, "Doing the Common Good Better: A Call to Citizens Action in Minnesota," recognizes the immediate need to revitalize K-12 curricula to reflect

the need for reaffirming the citizen's role and educate for active citizenship. The long-term health of our state depends upon its educational system. Minnesota has a rich tradition of civic leadership and has reasons to remain hopeful that it will rise to the challenge of educating for citizenship in the 21st century.

Charter schools: active citizenship

Since the Citizens League's groundbreaking 1988 report "Chartered Schools = Choices for Educators + Quality for All Students" paved the way for Minnesota to adopt the nation's first charter school law, 38 other states and the District of Columbia have adopted similar laws. Today, more than 2,700 charter schools operate nationwide. Charter schools draw on the authority of the citizen by allowing teachers, parents and other community members the opportunity to come together to find innovative and effective ways of educating their community's children. They require that active, informed citizens believe in the importance of great schools and demonstrate the wherewithal to navigate the complex authorization process. They require creative civic organizers that are open to relationships that are truly cross-sector in nature, as a successful school will require effective partnerships with the public and government sectors, non-profits and private businesses and foundations. Charter schools embody the promise of self governance and active citizenship in practice.

Charter schools continue to grow and thrive in Minnesota. Organizations like the Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, the Center for School Change, the Center for Policy Studies and the Gates/EdVisions project are providing the technical assistance necessary for new and existing charter schools to ensure accountability to their foundational missions and high academic standards. Each year, millions of dollars in private grant funds to assist Minnesota charter schools enter the state through organizations like the Walton Family Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Increasingly, Minnesota colleges and universities and large non-profits recognize the value of charter schools and are willing to sponsor new schools. Charter schools

have changed the landscape of education in Minnesota.

Civic Leadership Academy

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of working with a talented, committed group of educators to propose the Civic Leadership Academy (CLA) charter high school model to open in the fall of 2004. School founders recognize the civic mission of public education and seek a return to education for active citizenship. These ideals are reflected in the school's mission and learning program.

The mission

Civic Leadership Academy engages learners on their journey from self-discovery to active citizenship. Our learning community empowers students to uncover and draw forth their gifts by supporting individual inquiry and nurturing connection to community. CLA is committed to helping each student develop the knowledge and skills essential to be informed, active citizens in our society.

- ▲ Provide a participatory, inclusive environment that inspires all learners to contribute their unique gifts, energy and skills.
- ▲ Serve the learner through an integration of core curriculum studies, individualized inquiry projects and community based service learning opportunities.
- ▲ Engage primary stakeholders—including students and their families, teachers, staff, board and other community members—in school governance.

Self discovery

Civic leadership begins with the individual. It is crucial that students are supported in uncovering and drawing forth their own unique gifts and talents and encouraged to develop them. Knowledge acquisition, through instruction and experience, also guides the self discovery process. Critical thinking skills, communication skills such as reading and writing are crucial to the development of the individual. Students should also be encouraged to make decisions about their own educational experiences.

Community connection

Establishing connection to community is critical to the development of civic lead-

Viewpoint

A League of Citizens!

Summertime civic greetings! You may notice that this issue of the *Minnesota Journal* is a little different than usual. With good reason.

Part of this is due to the fact that I'm out of the office on vacation for a couple of weeks in June and July, and that I'm actually drafting this column from the front seat of a Toyota Previa that is barreling across what's left of Route 66 between Oklahoma City and Amarillo, Texas. (Don't worry, I'm not driving.)

But there are three more important reasons for changing the style of features in this issue. Each relates to how the Citizens League will continue to "do the common good better" by focusing on new ways to increase involvement, develop great new ideas, and have a meaningful impact in the community.

The Citizens League is about involvement. This means involvement in the Citizens League (stay tuned for new membership opportunities emerging this fall),



and involvement with the League. As the Citizens League moves forward to rebuild the organization, a critical first step is rebuilding and strengthening ties with our key partners: members, corporations, foundations, nonprofit organizations and others. When these partners are doing great things, in line with the overall mission of the League, it only makes sense for us to highlight this work, and to work to promote a strong civic network in Minnesota.

The article about "Citizen Blue" is a perfect example. Not only does this program increase community and policy involvement of Blue Cross employees, it also reflects the natural opportunities for Blue Cross to partner with other organizations on a range of civic and policy issues.

The Citizens League is about good ideas that build a great state. The recent "Doing the Common Good Better" report reminded us that we also need new ideas for a new time. Our civic and political landscape has changed dramatically, and the need for innovative, nonpartisan and non-ideological ideas is arguably stronger than it has been in a generation. Education is one area that the League has historically addressed, and which is ripe for new ideas.

Shane Weinand's piece on a plan to establish a Civic Leadership Academy is one such example. As we develop new schools, how can we renew the civic purpose of public education? What new strategies will emerge from this effort that will have broader policy implications and opportunities?

The Citizens League is about community impact. The involvement and good ideas need to lead to real change. And sometimes the best and most sustainable ideas emerge from practice, not just study and reflection.

Certainly each of the three examples in this issue relate to impact, but consider the potential of Civics Incorporated to develop emerging leaders who can do more than complain about the current state of affairs, or wish wistfully for a world they don't have the skills to create. Civics Incorporated is premised on its members implementing and evaluating real work plans for real-life situations. These efforts could have a tremendous long-term payoff, by developing leaders who have the political and civic skills to develop, test, evaluate and implement policy solutions that serve the common good.

And finally, the Citizens League will be a catalyst and a convener for great civic outcomes. Over the course of these two weeks I will have driven and flown thousands of miles, and talked with dozens of people in nearly a half dozen cities about a variety of civic issues. Each conversation, each article I read, and each community interaction makes me more appreciative of the fantastic civic assets we have in Minnesota.

We clearly face real and significant challenges in Minnesota in the next few years. Our budget, health care, education, energy and electoral systems are or will be under great stress. We also have the opportunity to build a leadership base and policy strategies to address these challenges. I hope that this issue highlights this opportunity, and the people and organizations working to achieve it. **MJ**

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OnBalance

Views From Around the State

High summer brings lawn mowing, mosquitoes and the first fallout from the state budget.

State budget cuts may not bring catastrophe, argues **The Mankato Free Press (6/24)**, but Minnesotans will certainly feel the impact. “There’s nothing like the prospect of releasing some of the most heinous sexual predators to bring home the possible ramifications of state spending. The sex offender program is just one of the many costly state programs that is finding it difficult to operate following the severe budget cuts of the recent legislative session. Many of the programs being hit are unnoticed by most Minnesotans who don’t use the service or are otherwise unaffected by it. But the thought of sexual predators being released to halfway houses because of budget cuts is an issue every Minnesotan can identify with. Perhaps such a volatile issue will help clarify to lawmakers and others supporting the no-new-tax concept that while it’s easy to say cutting spending alone won’t cause disaster, it certainly can have effects that Minnesota finds unacceptable.”

Attorney General Mike Hatch is using the sexual predator issue to take jabs at Gov. Tim Pawlenty and position himself for 2006, the **Red Wing Republican Eagle (6/27)** speculates. “Hatch entered the 2006 gubernatorial race this week, charging that Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s no-tax pledge is putting Minnesotans at risk. His announcement was fueled by the *Star Tribune*’s report that the Pawlenty administration is looking for ways to release some of its 190 sexual psychopaths from state treatment centers. Hatch did not officially launch his candidacy. That is still likely a couple years away. But the opportunistic Hatch seized the moment to make it clear that he is ready to lead the charge against Pawlenty as the DFL’s acknowledged front-runner for the gubernatorial post. We welcome a robust debate for the ‘06 governor’s race. But let’s make sure it is one based on facts and not on innuendoes.”

While they acknowledge Hatch’s political aspirations, the **West Central Tribune (6/25)** thinks he is looking out for the interest of the

people. “Hatch is also the attorney general. He has the responsibility to protect the people of Minnesota, especially from sexual predators. Any change in the current program should be discussed and open to review. Gov. Tim Pawlenty is blaming Hatch’s political ambition for his criticism...The Pawlenty administration should be up front with Minnesotans, not pointing blame to deflect criticism. They should not be secretive about a review of options on sexual offenders programs. Minnesotans have a right to know about any possible sexual offender program changes as well as the possible ramifications.”

Any proposals for state funding for a new sports stadium should go before voters, suggests the **Duluth News Tribune (6/13)**. “In Minnesota, before state leaders agree to tax the people to build a new stadium for the professional sports team, they had better find out what the majority of state residents (or citizens in a selected city or area) want. Aside from the university, a public institution, no one would quarrel if either of the professional teams wanted to finance their own new stadiums, with the public throwing in surrounding infrastructure. But in times of grievous deficits when programs ranging from medical care for the needy to keeping our state parks up and open are being cut, it’s hard to imagine the state asking taxpayers to help build stadiums for private organizations. Not without a referendum.”

Now that Minnesota has made it on the top of the ‘Kids Count’ national survey, editors question how the budget cuts will affect our future ratings. “Getting on top takes work. Staying on top takes work as well. We hope officials remember that when it comes to Minnesota’s children,” chides the **Mankato Free Press (6/13)**. “We believe that after school programs for at-risk children are important. Insurance programs are, too. Legislators must remember that spending money now on children’s issues can save us money and heartache later.”

The **Rochester Post-Bulletin (6/23)** agrees. “A question remains as to whether Minnesota’s current ‘no-tax-increase’ policy will produce similar results in the future. Current conditions are the result of the investments that have been made in the past to deal with social issues. Under Gov. Tim Pawlenty, that policy was turned upside down. The emphasis was on putting a tax freeze above some social values. While these indicators do not change quickly, there is a real danger that such a policy over several years could produce far less commendable results for the children of Minnesota.”

The **Duluth News Tribune (6/14)**, wants the University of Minnesota students to realize they have to behave civilly, and will be disciplined if they choose to keep rioting. “Of course student malefactors who commit crimes off-campus should be disciplined. And the university shouldn’t be shy about expelling students found guilty of such crimes as damaging property, stealing, and looting, setting fires, throwing bottles, resisting arrest, threatening violence, obstructing traffic and refusing to disperse when directed to by authorities. Every student enrolling at the university should understand that his or her status is contingent upon obeying the rules of society and the laws of the state. It’s disquieting to realize that the university-bound young adults need to be told these things, but there it is.”

“Seat belts save lives and increased usage is good. Yet, as successful of this latest crackdown appears to be, the number of seat belt tickets issued in late May is also troubling,” worries the **Mankato Free Press**. “To get stopped and ticketed, drivers had to be breaking other traffic laws. So a ticket for a seat belt violation means much more. To get ticketed for a seat belt violation, most motorists need to be doing something else wrong on the roadway. That needs to change.”

CitizenBlue: Creating opportunities for citizenship in the workplace

by Laurie L. Nelson

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota has established an innovative—and successful—program known as CitizenBlue. The mission of this employee-led grassroots program is to educate employees about the political system, encourage participation in government at all levels, to promote good citizenship, and to stimulate interest in bringing about change through the democratic process.

Founded in 2000, CitizenBlue embodies the company's vision for promoting lifelong learning and encouraging social responsibility. CitizenBlue is a unique workplace initiative because it focuses on education, not advocacy. Since the health insurance industry is heavily regulated, it is vital that employees have a context in which to understand the workings of government and public policy. However, CitizenBlue does not support or oppose any public policy, political party or candidate.

Typical workplace grassroots political programs tend to focus on advocacy on behalf of the company's issues. Kathy Mock, vice president of policy and legislative affairs, says this approach can be one-sided. "The benefits of a large-scale grassroots initiative are limited if it focuses on just the company needs," she says.

CitizenBlue was developed with the company's vision in mind and sought to focus on the employee needs. "Too often individuals feel left out of policy-making. CitizenBlue asserts that all of us have a vital role in democracy," says Mock. CitizenBlue helps employees understand government processes, enables them to follow legislation and gives them confidence to communicate with elected officials.

By offering a good knowledge base and by providing the tools for engagement, employees better understand the impact of public policy on their lives, in their communities and on business. "I think being a part of CitizenBlue has expanded my understanding of the direct affect that politics have on both business and personal decisions," says CitizenBlue member Sara Harker-Olson. "It has really sparked my

interest to be more involved."

CitizenBlue is truly a grassroots initiative; it is run by those it is meant to serve.

An 11-member volunteer employee advisory team guides the program and creates initiatives based on feedback from CitizenBlue members. The advisory team represents employees in many areas of the company, which helps CitizenBlue be responsive to employee needs.

Employees opt-in to CitizenBlue

Members receive regular communication from the advisory team, the opportunity to attend special events and the handbook "You Matter: A Citizen's Guide to Government." It provides contact infor-

The benefits of a large-scale grassroots initiative are limited if it focuses on just the company needs.

mation for key government offices and explains government structure and procedures. It also includes tips on effectively communicating with elected officials. So far, more than 550 of 4,100 Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota employees (13 percent) have become members of CitizenBlue.

Many CitizenBlue services are available to non-members as well. CitizenBlue offers a wide range of programs and opportunities for involvement, allowing employees to be involved as much or as little as they choose. Additionally, it provides access to educational opportunities to a wide audience, from those with little understanding of government to those who are involved but wish to enhance their knowledge and power as citizens.

One example of the company wide service CitizenBlue provides occurred during the 2002 election. CitizenBlue sponsored a meet the candidates series featuring local, state and national candidates from each of Minnesota's four major political parties. In addition to the candidate forums, Citizen

Blue voter services included voter registration, get out the votes reminders and a broad-based voter education campaign.

CitizenBlue is active year round, hosting events such as legislative updates, and meeting with elected officials. In March, the CitizenBlue Advisory Team celebrated Women's History Month by hosting a panel discussion on women making history in government with Sen. Sheila Kiscaden, Sen. Mee Moua and Hennepin County Administrator Sandra Vargas. CitizenBlue also hosted a discussion last spring with representatives from print, television and radio journalism to discuss the role of citizens in the public dialogue.

CitizenBlue members also have the opportunity to visit the state Capitol during the legislative session. In 2003, more than 50 Blue Cross employees attend the CitizenBlue Capitol tours where they learned the history of Minnesota government, visited with legislators and watched the House and the Senate in action.

The CitizenBlue program has also become part of the growth of the Blue Cross community. Members have learned about volunteer opportunities for civic engagement that meet the criteria of Blue Cross and Blue Shield's Heart of Blue volunteer program. Employees also turn to CitizenBlue to recognize major events. For instance, to commemorate the anniversary of September 11, Blue Cross employees participated in an online Journal of Reflection, where they expressed their thoughts about democracy and remembered the day through prose, poetry and pictures.

The growth of CitizenBlue has allowed Blue Cross employees many outlets to learn more about government processes, and new opportunities continue to emerge. In April 2003, CitizenBlue launched the CitizenBlue Degree program in conjunction with Blue Cross University, the employee training and education center at Blue Cross. Thirty-eight employees met for two two-hour sessions and worked to create a better understanding of government institutions, processes and policies. In addition, the students explored the critical role of citizens in government. The class was so popular that it will be expanded

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Civics Incorporated *continued from page 1*

several reams of paper? Well, our heroine recently became a member of Civics Incorporated. As part of the 10-week introductory education seminar, students are asked to identify a public problem in a place where they are invested. The course-work focuses on participants gaining the skills, the confidence and the network needed to tackle that problem. As you might guess, Lanni decided that using Civics Incorporated as her inspiration and guide, she would attempt to curb the PR firm's penchant for paper.

To highlight one small part of her process, Lanni worked to identify her "enlightened self-interest" in her solution. As an example of one of its many lessons, Civics Incorporated teaches its members that people gain power and effectiveness to create change when they align their own self-interest with the interest of others. Members then take this concept to a higher level by tying their self-interest to the common good by identifying their enlightened self-interest. Enlightened self-interest differs from shared self-interest by adding the dimension of the "greater good," rather than stopping at the common ground. Enlightened self-interest allows people to advocate for a solution because it most effectively serves the common good.

As part of this strategy, Civics Incorporated members learn skills for identifying one's own enlightened self-interest, and skills for meeting and developing relationships with others to help identify their self-interests. It encourages its members to artic-

ulate their own enlightened self-interest as a technique to create a civic atmosphere.

Now, the PR firm was understandably far removed from trees and wood pulp in its high-rise location. But our young advocate figured that the firm was in touch with its bottom line. Lanni decided that saving money was clearly in the interest of the business, so she would use that to make her case.

She researched the cost of using paper in an office environment and was surprised to learn that the company actually paid for its paper use twice—once for the product and again for its removal. She studied the cost of post-consumer paper. She brainstormed possible paper-saving office policies. She decided that she would start her reform plan by simply getting the office to print on both sides of paper. She ran the idea past colleagues who would be able to help her implement the plan if management approved, and then she was ready to meet with the "biggs."

Lanni worked doggedly on her project as she completed her Civics Incorporated coursework. The members of Civics Incorporated supported her work—providing feedback, ideas and resources. Her project was largely a success. The company higher-ups and her colleagues supported her plan, and she eventually got a printer assigned for office-wide draft printing on pre-used paper. In addition to serving the company's interest and the greater good, Lanni Harris got her name on the map—something that served her own self-interest!

It might seem like a small victory to make such a fuss about. But experience shows that small victories yield bigger victories. Members of Civics Incorporated are currently making changes all over the Twin Cities in the places where they work, volunteer and live.

▲ St. Paul neighborhood groups are working with city government in new ways, thanks to Civics Incorporated members.

▲ Civics Incorporated members are working to start charter schools.

▲ Some members are working to improve the educational success of minority students by increasing community involvement.

▲ One Civics Incorporated member, a banker, worked to change the criteria for lending to inner-city entrepreneurs.

▲ One member is currently running for elected office.

▲ And yet another member was recently hired as President of the Citizens League.

Civics Incorporated meets monthly to coach, prod and inspire the next generation of civic leadership. Interested individuals can begin their membership by enrolling in a Civics Incorporated education seminar; the next 10-week class begins Sept. 16. Enrollment details and further information is available online at www.civicsinc.org MJ

Amy Brendmoen is a brazen Gen X-er. She works for Attorney General Mike Hatch and is the Board Chair of Civics Incorporated. Civics Incorporated is affiliated with the statewide Active Citizenship Initiative.

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and offered again in the fall.

Dr. Mark Banks, president and CEO of Blue Cross says the program has had a positive impact for the employees and for Blue Cross as a whole. "CitizenBlue has provided great benefits to Blue Cross employees and to the company. Blue Cross is a large workplace community, and CitizenBlue provides opportunities for employees to enhance their knowledge and to strengthen their skills as citizens."

The program's impact has spread beyond the walls of Blue Cross to employees' homes and communities. One of the unex-

pected outcomes has been how many employees pass on what they have learned to family and friends. A number of participants on the Capitol tours said they planned to return with their families, and many people who requested information on voting passed on a voter registration card to their adult children. Other employees have worked as election judges after hearing about the opportunity to serve from CitizenBlue.

Because of CitizenBlue, hundreds of Blue Cross employees have gained a better understanding of their power as citizens.

The members of the CitizenBlue Advisory Team remain committed to breaking down barriers to political involvement. The success of CitizenBlue underscores the interest that Minnesotans have in civic engagement and demonstrates that, when given the opportunity, citizens will engage in the political system. MJ

Laurie L. Nelson is grassroots program coordinator at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota in Eagan.

ers. Fostering a school climate that is inclusive and draws on the authority of students in partnership with teachers and staff is essential in developing a supportive learning environment. Maintaining strong community relationships is also essential to allow students a variety of opportunities to engage with the community at large and build awareness of timely public issues.

Active citizenship

Active citizens answer the call to self governance in our society. They are equipped with the knowledge, skills and desire to engage stakeholders with public problems and move towards workable solutions. They are difference makers that value their own contributions and the contributions of others. They are *civic leaders*.

School learning program

The Civic Leadership Academy's curriculum combines the best practices of public schools around the nation. In order to align our founding mission with our model in practice, we have designed a curriculum that combines core curriculum courses with project-based learning opportunities to meet graduation requirements.

Core curriculum classes will be offered in math, science, language arts and social studies that help students develop the basic knowledge and skills that any high school graduate in Minnesota should have. Project-based learning is a learner directed method that allows individuals to take a leadership role in making decisions that affect their educational experiences. Projects are individualized and move at the pace of the learner, and students are encouraged to develop and pursue personal interests while maintaining accountability to graduation standards and school mission.

Students also learn the value of *active citizenship* through project-based learning as knowledge and skills are acquired in authentic settings, and students will have hands-on opportunities to make a difference in their world. Partnering with outside organizations often allows students to see the immediate impact of their work and learn firsthand the "real world" implications of developing workable solutions to public problems.

The future is bright for Minnesota

Throughout the development of Civic Leadership Academy, founders have been

encouraged by the number of talented individuals and organizations that are making education for active citizenship a priority. There is a palpable energy for revitalizing K-12 education and actively engaging younger generations with their communities. While public education in Minnesota is still very strong, and without exception, committed to getting better, educators cannot be expected to shoulder this great responsibility alone. Education in a changing world is by nature a work in progress and must actively involve the private, public and government sectors in its operations. The example set by our pioneering work in Minnesota has been valuable to the nation, and our strong traditions of social innovation and entrepreneurship are alive and well. With organizations like the Citizens League helping to pave the way for a rich and vibrant future, there is little reason to believe that Minnesota will not rise to the challenges of the day and, indeed, answer the call to do the common good better. **MJ**

Shane Weinand currently serves as the Project Manager for the Civic Leadership Academy.

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TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

With cool temps well into June, summer's barely begun, but the dog days will soon be upon us.

The standard political notion is that in dealing with budget problems there are cuts and there are taxes and that's all. You put less revenue in, you get less "service" out. You want more "service" out, you have to put more revenue in. If you do put more revenue in you will get more "service" out. Etc.

This is nonsense, of course. But it's amazing how strong a hold it has on people, and how non-thinkingly it's repeated in most of what you read from the Capitol.

Inside the great "black box" of government, of course, there is a mechanism that turns resources into results—more efficiently or less efficiently, depending on how you set it. By resetting the mechanism it is possible to do less, even with more. It is also possible to do more with less—or at least without having to put more dollars in.

In the 2003 session Gov. Tim Pawlenty and the Legislature declined to put in "more." Now the pressure is coming back about "the cuts." A lot will turn on whether state leadership now gets "inside the box" and finds ways to reset that mechanism that turns resources into results.—*Ted Kolderie.*

For some new and different perspectives on K-12 education policy, visit: www.educationevolving.org. It was created by a policy group in Minnesota, a partnership of The Center for Policy Studies and Hamline University.—*T.K.*

Public Agenda is a well-regarded issues organization in New York that combines professional opinion research with focus-group discussion. This spring they surveyed a sample of America's schoolteachers. Mostly it was well-worn questions eliciting well-known answers: No we don't like merit pay, yes we worry about the principal's favoritism, no we don't want to give up our union's protection. But they did ask one question testing another idea about the way teachers could work: "How interested would you be in working in a charter school run and managed by teachers?"

The results are stunning. Fifty-eight per cent of the teachers would be somewhat or very interested in working in that arrangement. Sixty-five per cent of the teachers with less than five years' experience would be (only 25 percent not). So would 50 per-

cent of veteran teachers (those with more than 20 years). Note that the question asked the teachers to decide if they'd like to work in the charter sector, before reacting to the "ownership" idea.—*T.K.*

These women are raising dough. EMILY's List, (Early Money is Like Yeast), a national political action committee which raises money for Democratic, pro-choice women running for state and federal office, raised \$30 million for women candidates in 2002. This puts the 18-year-old PAC on par with the National Rifle Association and the Teamsters in terms of fundraising clout, said Ann Leston, a trainer for EMILY's List. In the nine elections since EMILY's List was founded, it has helped to elect 55 congresswomen and nine governors.—*J. Trout Lowen.*

Reporters and academics and legislators have been scratching their heads, wondering "Are charter schools working?" It's hard to know: The evidence keeps coming back mixed.

One researcher, at least, thinks that's the wrong question. The right question is: "Which chartered schools are working best?" These schools are all different. A charter school is not a kind of school—in the sense of a learning program. This is why the evidence is bound to come back "mixed." We need to look inside this new sector; talk about which types of charter schools are working relatively better, or less well.—*T.K.*

Generational equity and healthcare reform. In a recent *Newsweek*, columnist Robert Samuelson warns about the long-term costs of our efforts to reform Medicare. We may take care of seniors, and senior voters, on

the backs of people that can't vote right now. This pressure will increase as the baby boomers retire, and these federal actions will have serious consequences for our budget issues and service systems here in MN.—*T.K.*

According to the Department of Justice, in 2002 the number of prisoners in the United States exceeded 2 million for the first time in history. The five states with the highest incarceration rates per 100,00 residents (ranging in descending order from 799 to 593) were Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Oklahoma and Alabama. Minnesota was among the lowest, along with Maine, North Dakota, Rhode Island and New Hampshire (ranging from 137 to 197).—*Christine Nelson.*

An accounting class at University of Wisconsin, Madison, was given a take home test in place of an in-class examination to accommodate a lecture by Sherry Watkins, the Enron whistleblower. It was later discovered that 40 of the 78 students in the class cheated on the exam, reported the *Badger Online*.—*C.N.*

A recent issue of the Chronicle of Philanthropy highlights significant proposals to improve nonprofit governance, outlaw small private foundations, increase IRS support to scrutinize tax-exempt groups and also allow the agency to share information with states proposed by New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. If Minnesota supports these proposals the impacts could be significant for the state's large nonprofit and foundation communities.—*Marina Munoz Lyon.*

Take Note contributors include Minnesota Journal staff and League members.