



The multifaceted, political immersion approach of Kids Voting is unique in its ability to cultivate the skills and desire necessary for long term political engagement. Thanks to several rigorous studies, Kids Voting can claim the following outcomes.

### **Kids Voting has wide-reaching impact on civic development**

By instituting a program focused on integrating multiple agents of political socialization, KVUSA has dramatic effects on a wide range of civic development measures. Students exposed to Kids Voting curriculum demonstrate higher levels of news attention, cognition, discussion with parents and friends, deliberative dispositions, and civic identity. Furthermore, after the passage of a year, participation is associated with increased social capital through higher levels of political activity at school and higher levels volunteering in the community.

### **Kids Voting is a catalyst for long term civic engagement**

The most impressive aspect of Kids Voting is the lasting impact of the curriculum. One year after the initial participation, KVUSA demonstrated effects in 21 of 25 curriculum measures. Specifically, KVUSA netted positive effects in levels of media use, discussion, cognition, opinion formation, and civic participation. In fact, students demonstrated *increased* levels of cognition, deliberative habits, partisanship and ideology. Moreover, KVUSA influence remained significant for the following measures a full *two years* after participation: attention to Internet news, frequency of discussion with friends, testing opinions in conversation, support for unconventional activism, volunteering, and campus activism. KVUSA is able to achieve these effects because students develop the self-sustaining democratic habits of news consumption and discussion.

### **Kids Voting serves as a catalyst for deliberative democracy**

Deliberative democracy rests on the very principle that citizens should desire to test their opinions out in conversation. Kids Voting prepares students for this form of discursive citizenship by developing the necessary democratic dispositions. Specifically, numerous studies demonstrate that Kids Voting promotes willingness to disagree, willingness to listen to opponents, testing out opinions in conversation and challenging the views of parents. Furthermore, students participating in the Kids Voting program significantly expand their discussion networks. This broadening of discussion networks increases the likelihood of encountering differing opinions.

### **Kids Voting closes the civic education gap**

Great divides in political involvement still exist along racial and socioeconomic status lines. Therefore, any successful civic education program must work to narrow these gaps. In numerous studies, KVUSA has demonstrated that ability. For example, low-SES students and parents from San Jose closed gaps in political knowledge, media use, discussion, and opinion formation after participating in the program. Moreover, Hispanic students in El Paso County narrowed or completely closed gaps in attention to news, attention to a state amendment enforcing English only instruction, knowledge, integration of new information, willingness to listen to opposing views, willingness to disagree, and support for conventional politics. These dramatic changes illustrate Kids Voting's ability to close the civic education gap.

### **Kids Voting creates civic bonding of the school and family**

The two most important environments for civic growth are the school and the family. Working independently, these two spheres tend to have impacts that are marginal and fleeting. Kids Voting unites these two spheres to create long-term changes at the individual, family, and community levels. Kids Voting participants, inspired by classroom activity, demonstrate increased levels of student-initiated discussion at home. This discussion then spurs increased news attention and knowledge among children and parents. These new habits serve to create a political environment at home that is self-sustaining. The effects at home then boomerang back to the school by parents encouraging their children to more freely express themselves in class discussions. KVUSA then enlivens the community by growing discussion networks and prompting greater intention to vote among the participants and their parents. Additionally, one study showed that KVUSA participation in 2002 predicted the following civic involvement measures for parents in 2004: news attention, cognition, discussion inside and outside the home, deliberative habits, support for unconventional participation, volunteering, and activism.

### **The overall impact of Kids Voting**

As the above results outline, KVUSA transforms the major aspects necessary for knowledgeable and engaged civic participation. The program equips students with the habits and skills necessary for a life of civic participation. KVUSA gives rise to a lively domestic sphere that encourages the sustained political growth of the parent and child. This blossoming domestic sphere then feeds back into the school and community, which truly creates a community committed to democracy.

### **References**

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