



We the People THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

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2009 Professional Development Summer Institutes We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution

During the summer of 2009, Dr. Thomas Vontz, Associate Professor of Education and Director of the Center for Social Studies Education at Kansas State University, conducted a two-phase evaluation of the Center for Civic Education's We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution summer institutes. Only those institutes lasting between five and seven days were selected for evaluation, including the Grand Teton Summer Institute and Iowa Summer Institute (high school institutes), National Middle School Institute, National Elementary Institute I, and National Elementary Institute II.

Key Findings

- Participation in a We the People summer institute had a positive and statistically significant effect on teachers' civic knowledge across civic concepts.
- Participating in an institute lasting five to seven days significantly increased elementary- and middle-school teachers' knowledge of civil society and representative democracy.
- The professional development experience significantly increased teacher confidence at all grade levels in teaching core civic concepts: constitutionalism, representative democracy, human rights, citizenship, and civil society.
- When asked how their teaching was affected after returning to their classrooms, respondents reported that the summer institutes increased their understanding of several important civic principles: constitutional history, responsibilities of citizens, the Bill of Rights, purposes of government, and the importance of citizen participation.
- After implementing what they learned at the institute in their classrooms, ninety-three percent of participants reported that their institute attendance improved their teaching.
- More than ninety-four percent of participants reported that the professional development positively influenced their ability to lead meaningful civics discussions in their classrooms.