National Civic Index for Quality Public Education

Toolkit Introduction Worksheet—Text Only Version

Created by Public Education Network (PEN)

This text version of the Public Education Network's National Civic Index for Quality Public Education Toolkit Introduction Worksheet has been created for those who do not have access to a high-speed Internet connection, find this format easier to read, or want an easy reference or facilitation tool. There are slight modifications in the formatting of this version since it is not a web-based product; however, it contains the same content as the online version.

This worksheet provides you with an opportunity to capture your responses for a quick reference during the use of the Toolkit Introduction or to capture responses, so you can print them for yourself or to share with others. It is intended to be used as you experience the online version; however, you may also use it as part of group facilitated effort.

What is your experience with public education?

Take a moment to consider

- ✓ What actions you take to support public schools?
- ✓ What activities take place in your community to support public schools?

What is your experience with public education?

Check all that apply and then award the number of points allotted to each descriptor. The numbers reflect what the National Civic Index Poll has learned about what types of support have the most impact on supporting quality public education.

To support public schools, I have		
Voted for an official who strongly supports public schools	☐	12 points
Joined an organization that supports public schools	☐	8 points
Experienced or known someone else who has experienced a positive interaction with a teacher or school administrator	☐	14 points
Talked to others about academic performance information published each year about local schools	☐	10 points
Followed the actions and decisions of my local school board as well as voted in school board elections	☐	10 points
		Total Points for Individual Support

In my community, I know about		
Programs or strategies my school district uses to meet the needs of every student, no matter the background or ability level of the student	☐	14 points
School-sponsored programs that involve students in community activities	☐	8 points
Opportunities for high school students to engage in college-sponsored activities	☐	8 points
Workplaces who contribute to schools	☐	8 points
An educational issue that the media covered well	☐	8 points
		Total Points for Community Support

Are your efforts and the efforts of your community having an impact? Do you see any gaps?

The National Poll has revealed the importance of taking both a strong personal stance for education and a strong community stance for education by voting and participating in activities that support education. Every individual in the community needs to take responsibility for keeping informed about public education and sharing information with others. Efforts may be sponsored by schools, colleges, organizations, businesses, or the media. They may target young children or adolescents. However, efforts,

that have the greatest impact, share one commonality—they seek to ensure that all children and youth attend quality public schools.

The Index recommends that individuals, community members, and organizations provide opportunities that encourage citizens to engage and support efforts to promote educational issues by

- reaching out and supporting local officials, businesses, and organizations to support education,
- learning how to read and use data about student and school performance,
- fostering youth development,
- getting involved with schools in a wider variety of ways, and
- encouraging and following media coverage of education.

Consider your experiences and how you can continue to support public education. Then, in the text box below, record two goals you feel are vital in creating quality public schools.

1.

2.

Indicators for National Civic Index Categories

Please check the box preceding any of the indicators listed below for which you need more information.

Indicators for Educational Leadership of Locally Elected Officials

When **Elected Officials** support public education by 1) making it a community priority, 2) increasing the flow of information about educational issues to and from local elected officials, and 3) supporting partnerships between local elected officials and school leaders, they are adopting **Educational Leadership Roles.**

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster Educational Leadership of Locally Elected Officials:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Elected officials demonstrate a sustained commitment to education and make public education a top priority. ☐ Elected officials advocate for adequate funding. ☐ Elected officials effectively communicate with constituents on education issues. ☐ Elected officials promote a clear agenda that advances student achievement.	No additional data is needed for this category.

Indicators for Commitment to the Values of Tolerance and Inclusiveness

When a community **Commits to the Values of Tolerance and Inclusiveness,** the public engages in activities to address issues that come from differences in culture, race, class, and language among school staff, student population, and community population, make sure that all students have a quality education, and encourage representation of all stakeholder groups in decision-making opportunities.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster Commitment to the Values of Tolerance and Inclusiveness:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Schools provide the same educational opportunities to students of all backgrounds. ☐ Schools provide quality services for special needs students (English language learners, special education students, etc.).	☐ School board members reflect the diversity of the families in the school district. ☐ Low income and racial/ethnic minority organizations have a say in school and school district decision-making. ☐ The student population in local public schools reflects the diversity of the community.

Indicators for Active Parents

When **Parents Actively** engage in public education, they participate in activities to share information, become involved in a variety of ways, and participate in decision making.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Active Parents**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Parents participate in school-related parent organizations.	☐ Parents participate in school district policy making, governance, and decision-making.
☐ Parents stay informed about key education issues.	☐ Parents participate in school governance and decision-making.
☐ Parents participate actively in their child's education, such as volunteering in the school, getting their child to school on time, or doing homework with their child.	☐
☐ Schools encourage active parent participation/contributions.	

Indicators for Strong Civic Organizations

When **Strong Civic Organizations** engage in public education, their membership and organizational priorities promote activities to involve the public in education reform, identify and advocate for important education issues, and build and help resource networks to last.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Strong Civic Organizations**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Local organizations create opportunities to gather citizen input on education issues and to inform community members about where candidates for elected office stand on these issues.	☐ Community organizations define and advocate for public school accountability.
☐ Local organizations provide help for those most in need and pay special attention to low-performing schools.	☐ The public is actively involved in community organizations that partner with the schools.
☐ Local organizations share resources with schools, including expertise, funding, volunteers, and coordination of health and social services.	☐

Indicators for Utilization of School Performance Data to Improve School Quality

When communities **Utilize School Performance Data to Improve School Quality**, they take two approaches: Organizations, parents, family members, community members, business, and other groups engage in activities that include the presentation of data about local schools as well as prepare those involved to explore data in a meaningful way. By using data for these two purposes, communities are able to focus on the academic progress of all children and youth.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Utilization of School Performance Data to Improve School Quality**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Information about school performance is widely communicated and readily available in a form and language that the community can understand.	☐ Schools make parents and the community full partners in developing and supporting strategies for student academic progress. ☐ Information about school performance is explained to the community through a variety of channels, including the school district, local government, nonprofit organizations, and the media. ☐ Teachers and school staff are properly trained in how to use data to engage parents and the community to improve student achievement.

Indicators for Youth Involvement

When communities provide opportunities for **Youth Involvement**, youth are engaged in activities to increase their participation political and civic events and to address their academic and social needs.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Youth Involvement**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Community and schools provide students with the education and skills to effectively participate in the political and civic process. ☐ Schools encourage students to participate in school and local district governance through such activities as student council, student advisory boards, and/or student members of the school board. ☐ Youth regularly engage in community service and volunteer activities. ☐ Youth are perceived as assets and contributors to the community.	No additional data is needed for this category.

Indicators for Partnerships with Higher Education

When community groups, schools, and others **Partner with Higher Education**, these efforts result in greater support for quality public education, shared institutional resources, and coordinated efforts for students across institutions.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Partnerships with Higher Education**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Higher education institutions partner with school districts to resolve school improvement challenges, including bolstering the quality of teaching and learning, and supporting schools that need special assistance. ☐ College or university students provide support to local schools through volunteering, service-learning, and internships.	☐ Institutions of higher learning provide shared use of college facilities, college faculty, and courses. ☐

Indicators for Knowledge of and Voting for School Boards

When communities create activities to increase **Knowledge of and Voting for School Board**, they increase public participation in school board activities, establish relationships with individual board members, and strengthen networks between the school board, local leaders, and the community.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster **Knowledge of and Voting for School Boards**:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Individuals monitor school board decisions and policies. ☐ Individuals vote regularly in school board elections.	☐ Individuals have the means to regularly address the school board or discuss school board policies. ☐

Indicators for Active Business Community

An Active Business Community participants purposefully in supporting public education and engages in activities that allow them to share their resources to support education in innovative ways.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster Active Business Community:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ Local business leaders work closely with other community and civic leaders to identify school needs and address critical school issues.	☐ Local business leaders provide resources and expertise to school boards and district administrations around school improvement.
☐ Local businesses offer paid time and other incentives for their employees to be regularly involved in school activities.	☐

Indicators for Media Coverage

When Media Coverage is used to support quality public education, community organizations, schools, families, businesses, and others foster improved and increased local media coverage of education and initiate strategies to establish and maintain open communication between educators, local elected officials, the public, and media sources.

The following indicators demonstrate the conditions necessary to foster Media Coverage:

Indicators Presented in the National Civic Index Poll Report	Additional Data to be Collected Regarding the Following Indicator
☐ The local media reports on the education positions of candidates for school board, mayor, state legislator, and other key offices.	No additional data is needed for this category.
☐ The local media provides in-depth reporting about how elected officials vote and the extent to which they keep their promises.	

What's Important in Your Community?

Take a moment to consider what you have learned about the National Civic Index.

What did you learn that you feel is important in helping your community support quality public education?

Record your answer in the *Text Box* below.

1.