

HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Researching the Impact of Facing History and Ourselves since 1976



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The website **Evidence for ESSA** (Federal Every Student Succeeds Act) expanded its offerings to include evaluations of **social-emotional learning** programs nationwide in 2020. This Johns Hopkins University effort, headed by Robert Slavin and others at the *Center for Research and Reform in Education* sifted through almost 150 SEL programs and then winnowed them down to 25 programs that met their high standards for evidence of efficacy. Facing History and Ourselves is listed as having strong outcomes in academic and social relationships.

(Evidence for ESSA/SEL, 2020)

“The Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom celebrates programs that apply the ever-accumulating body of Jewish wisdom to **help people...navigate life's big questions...**The 2018-19 Prize sought submissions from social-impact organizations that have an existing program or the seed of a new idea to **apply Jewish wisdom to support democracy and civic engagement.**” The Jewish Education team at Facing History and Ourselves was one of seven selected recipients chosen from a pool of 127 organizations.

(Lippman Kanfer Prize for Applied Jewish Wisdom, 2019)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has selected Facing History and Ourselves as one of only nine social-emotional learning programs in the US that has a proven positive effect on students, including increased empathy, prosocial behavior, and a better classroom climate. Facing History is also **one of only two programs**, out of nearly 400 nominated, that is proven to be effective for **both** middle and high school students.

(CASEL, 2015)

The April 2013 issue of *The Progress of Education Reform* provides a close look at the new civics and offers “Six Proven Practices of Civic Learning That Promote Student Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions”. They spotlighted Facing History and Ourselves as a **model program**, which exemplifies one of those key practices, namely, “Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues”.

(ECS, 2013)

The US Department of Education 2012 report, *Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action*, spotlighted Facing History and Ourselves as a “**Next Generation Leader**” in civics education in American schools.

(D.O.E., 2012)

For sixteen years, the US Department of Education selected Facing History and Ourselves as an “**exemplary program**” worthy of dissemination through the federal government's National Diffusion Network.

(Lieberman, 1993)

 Denotes research conducted or validated by independent scholars, while other information comes from studies conducted by Facing History's Evaluation Department.

opportunities that allow students and practice variety of civic skills and capacity for future participation (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008)

This large scale randomized controlled trial of Facing History and Ourselves demonstrated that Facing His

Promoted respect and tolerance for the rights of all people

Fostered awareness of the power and danger of prejudice and discrimination.

Increased students' civic efficacy and their capacity to make a difference in society.

The sample included 1,371 and 10 grade students from eight regions of the US.

(Barr et al., 2015)

From 2011 to 2018, dozens of students from across London participated in a civic-oriented student leadership program. After participating the group for seven months (n=45):

- 96% agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to challenge inequalities in society
- 96% agreed or strongly agreed that people should help those in their lives who need help
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they try to help when they see people in need
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to work for positive social change
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to get involved in improving their community

economic, and social forces shaping society reports that high levels of sociopolitical consciousness are predictive in marginalized adolescents of a number of key outcomes including resilience and civic engagement [emphasis added] --Scott Seider, et al., Applied Developmental Science 20Jan. 2017

In a longitudinal study of five charter high schools with the explicit goal of fostering students' academic development, independent researchers explored differences in socio-political consciousness among groups of freshman entering high school in 2013 over four years until their graduation in spring 2017. They conducted both pre and post tests each year, as well as interviews to understand how these adolescents made sense of the school training practices and their political agency, social awareness, and social action, the elements they explored which make up civic consciousness.

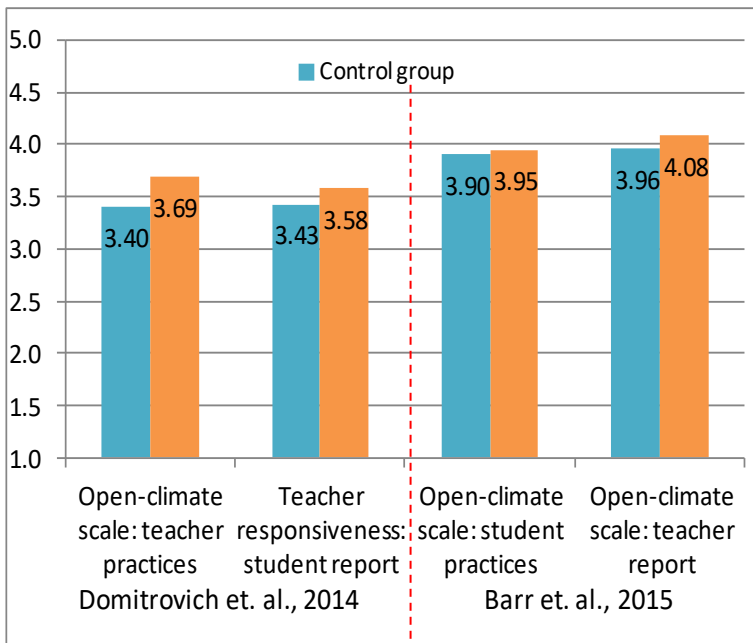
One of these schools uses Facing History deeply, it is a small New England charter with 91% students of color and high poverty (78% received free and reduced lunch). The school is a member of the Coalition Schools, and a founding member of the Facing History Partner School Network.

The researchers found that students in all schools increased their political agency over the course of the four years of high school, but students at the school that used Facing History had a higher level of political agency than comparison seniors who were not in civic-mission high schools.

- Seider & Graves, 2020

i Two Randomized Controlled Studies Show Impact on Classroom Climate

Studies demonstrate that Facing History teachers foster classroom climates that are significantly more inclusive, respectful, and tolerant of differing view points and beliefs than control classrooms. Facing History interventions in middle schools and high schools lead to the development of **safer** and more **engaging learning environments** (Barr et al., 2015), as well as open classrooms that **promote student voice** and **teacher responsiveness** (Domitrovich et al., 2014).



i Facing History Promotes Positive Relationships Within Schools

A randomized controlled trial proved that in urban middle schools where Facing History was being taught in all humanities classes, students reported **better relationships among students** and **greater respect between teachers and students**.

(Domitrovich et al., 2014)

“[Facing History] raises expectations, students become more effective communicators, they can translate a historical event to their own lives. Other teachers see ‘they can do this’ [and so change their expectations of students]...”

- Administrator at an alternative school for students in the juvenile justice system (Romer, 2015)

i New Comparison Study: Facing History and Ourselves’ Professional Development had Significant, Positive Impacts on School Climate

In these challenging times in our nation’s history, it is especially encouraging to identify strategies that work in helping students to feel safer and respected for who they are, so that they can reach their potential as students and civic participants.

The study, by researchers in the **Austin Independent School District**, found that middle school students of Facing History-trained teachers (in one school) gave significantly higher ratings than comparable middle school students at other schools (matched in terms ethnicity, gender and percent receiving free or reduced price lunch) on **14 of 15 dimensions of school climate**, including:

- **Greater respect and less bullying** among classmates
- **Better relationships between teachers and students**
- **A greater sense of safety, well-being** and **school engagement** among students

The district provides all students, including the comparison students, with social and emotional learning (SEL) opportunities at all grade levels. Nonetheless, the students in the school with Facing History-trained teachers (284 students in the sample) had more positive perceptions of school climate than comparison students (173 students).

Students in the intervention sample had at least one teacher who had in-depth training, and all of their teachers had the school-wide trainings focused on nurturing responsive community, and humanities teachers had supportive instructional leaders, perhaps leading to the positive school climate outcomes.

The results of this study are striking in that a relatively brief intervention resulted in **improvements in students’ perceptions of school climate**.

The context may help to explain how this was possible. The **Austin Unified School District** has prioritized social and emotional learning district wide, so the middle school teachers who received this intervention may have been particularly receptive and motivated to use Facing History in their teaching to reach district standards.

(Lamb AISD, Jan. 2019)

Facing History Supports a Culture of Respect

Students from a small public urban charter school which has incorporated Facing History through all humanities courses report a vivid and compelling picture of Facing History’s impact on the whole school. 137 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students were surveyed, representing 78% of the students in those grades.

- 95% of students have observed ways in which **Facing History has positively impacted their school.**
- 93% of juniors and sophomores and 92% of seniors reported that **bullying occurs “very rarely” or “rarely”.**

(Romer, 2011)

In a subsequent case study, students affirmed and the researcher observed, a strong **school-wide culture of civic responsibility.** Students reported a **strengthening of their academic efforts and commitment to learning over time.** They described a culture of high expectations and hard work, and teachers committed to helping them meet those high expectations.

- 93% of students from this school were **enrolled in college** at some point during their first two years after high school, according to National Student Clearinghouse data from 2010.

(Romer, 2012)

Teachers and Students in Partner Schools Demonstrate High Levels of Respect

52 educators from four Chicago Partner Schools—three middle schools and one high school—responded to a survey designed to study how educators frame the goals and added value of Facing History to their schools.

- 91% of educators agreed or strongly agreed that **adults** in their school demonstrate **respect for differences.**
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that adults in their school are **rarely disrespectful** to students.
- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that **most students** in their school **treat adults with respect.**
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that **students** in their school demonstrate a **respect for differences.**

(Barr & Becker, 2018)

Partner Schools Affect Teacher Self-Efficacy

The Facing History and Ourselves Memphis Neighborhood Schools Network involves schools that primarily serve students with historically marginalized identities in the context of schooling. The project aims to change school culture such that teachers from all disciplines assume that *all their students* can and will learn. The project also seeks to support practices that enable all students to thrive. The study involved a pre-post test design, fielding the same survey each year.

In year one, across all seven partner schools in this network:

- Teachers improved their **self efficacy for student-centered teaching** to a significant degree.
- Teachers strengthened their **self efficacy for motivating struggling readers to stay engaged with the text** to a highly significant degree.

In year two, across six schools we found:

- Teachers continued to strengthen their **self efficacy for motivating struggling readers to stay engaged with the text** to a highly significant degree.
- Among teachers at the subgroup of three turnaround schools, teachers continued to improve their **self efficacy for student-centered teaching** to a significant degree.

(Romer & Barr, 2018)

Students at Facing History Partner School Rate School Climate Positively

152 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at a Chicago Partner School responded to a survey designed to research students’ experience of school climate.

- 87% of students agreed or strongly agreed that their **teachers expect a lot from them academically.**
- 83% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they have at least one **teacher who cares about them** and helps them.
- 78% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they **fit in at their school.**
- 76% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they **learn important and interesting things** in their classes
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed “**I feel motivated to work hard in school**” (mean score: 4.11 out of 5)

(Barr & Becker, 2018)