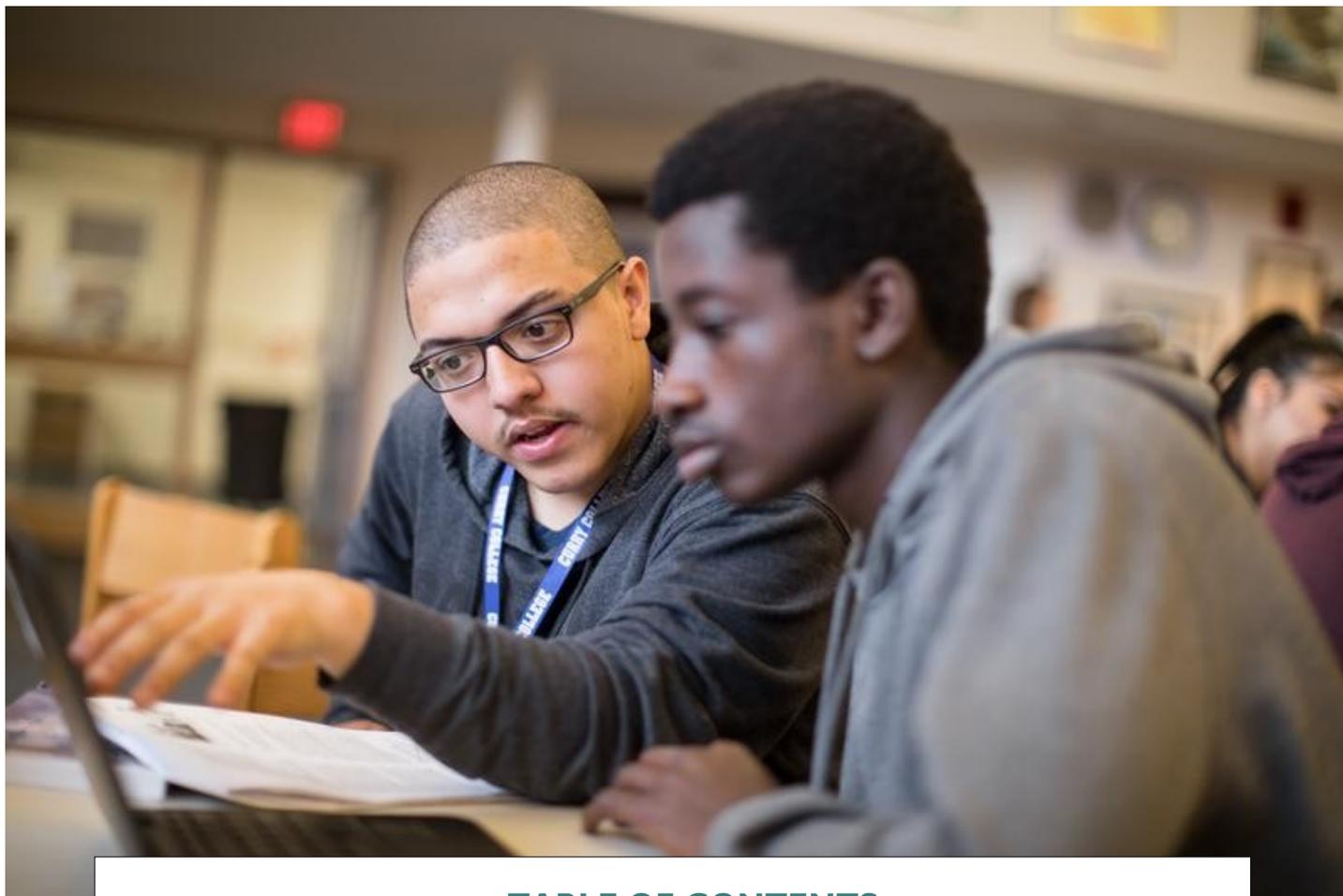


# HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Researching the Impact of Facing History and Ourselves since 1976



FACING  
HISTORY  
AND  
OURSELVES



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## **i** Field Experts Continue to Affirm Facing History's Excellence

“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 with top honors**, out of nearly 400 nominated, that is proven to be effective for middle and high school students.

(CASEL, 2015)

Social Impact Exchange selected Facing History and Ourselves to be part of their S&I 100 list—an index of **top nonprofits that are creating social change**. Each nonprofit on the list has an effective, high-impact intervention that serves large numbers of individuals in need, is expanding to serve more people locally or nationally, and has demonstrated impact validated by third-party studies.

(Social Impact Exchange, 2013)

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)

*"The National Evaluation Project study of Facing History by Abt Associates is **particularly impressive** with strong teacher and student outcomes. Their focus on **teacher efficacy** and the links to **student achievement** is well established by the research presented."*

(Federal Evaluation Reviewer, Facing History i3 Application, 2010)

The Berman Center for Research & Evaluation in Jewish Education identified Facing History and Ourselves as a **best practice in Holocaust Education**.

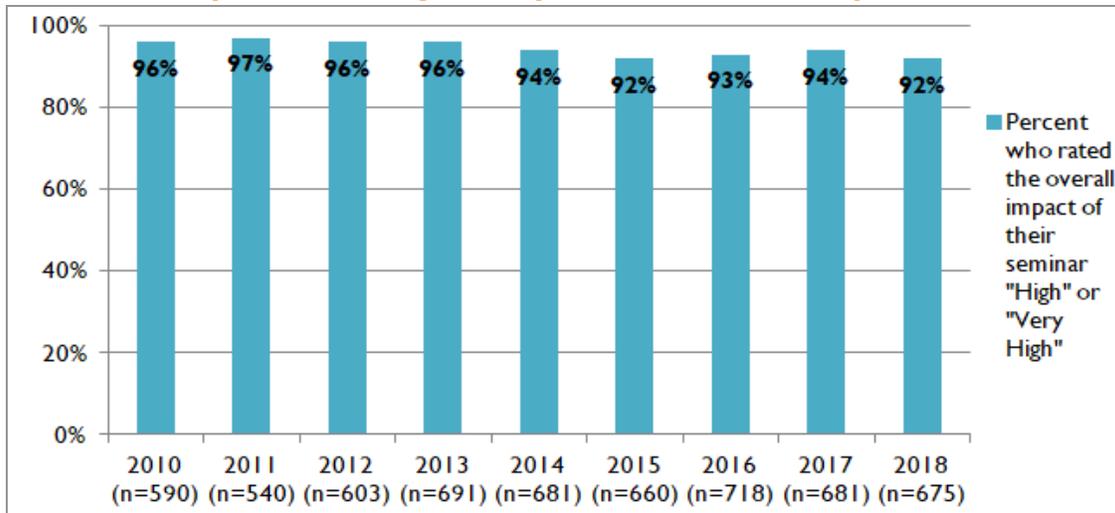
(Berman, 2006)

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)

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

## Positive and Consistent Impacts of Facing History Professional Development



### i Proven Impact on Teacher Self-Efficacy for Fostering Academic and Civic Learning

**Randomized Controlled Trial:** The study included 113 high school teachers and their 1,371 students in 60 schools across eight regions of the US (Findings published in peer-reviewed article in *Teachers College Record* 2015.)

- Participation in a Facing History professional development seminar and follow-up activities has a statistically significant impact on **teacher self-efficacy in eight instructional domains**—including creating student-centered classrooms—**satisfaction with professional development** experiences, and **satisfaction and engagement in the teaching profession**.

These findings were replicated with a second group of teachers and the effects were sustained in the second year for the first group.

(Barr et al., 2015)

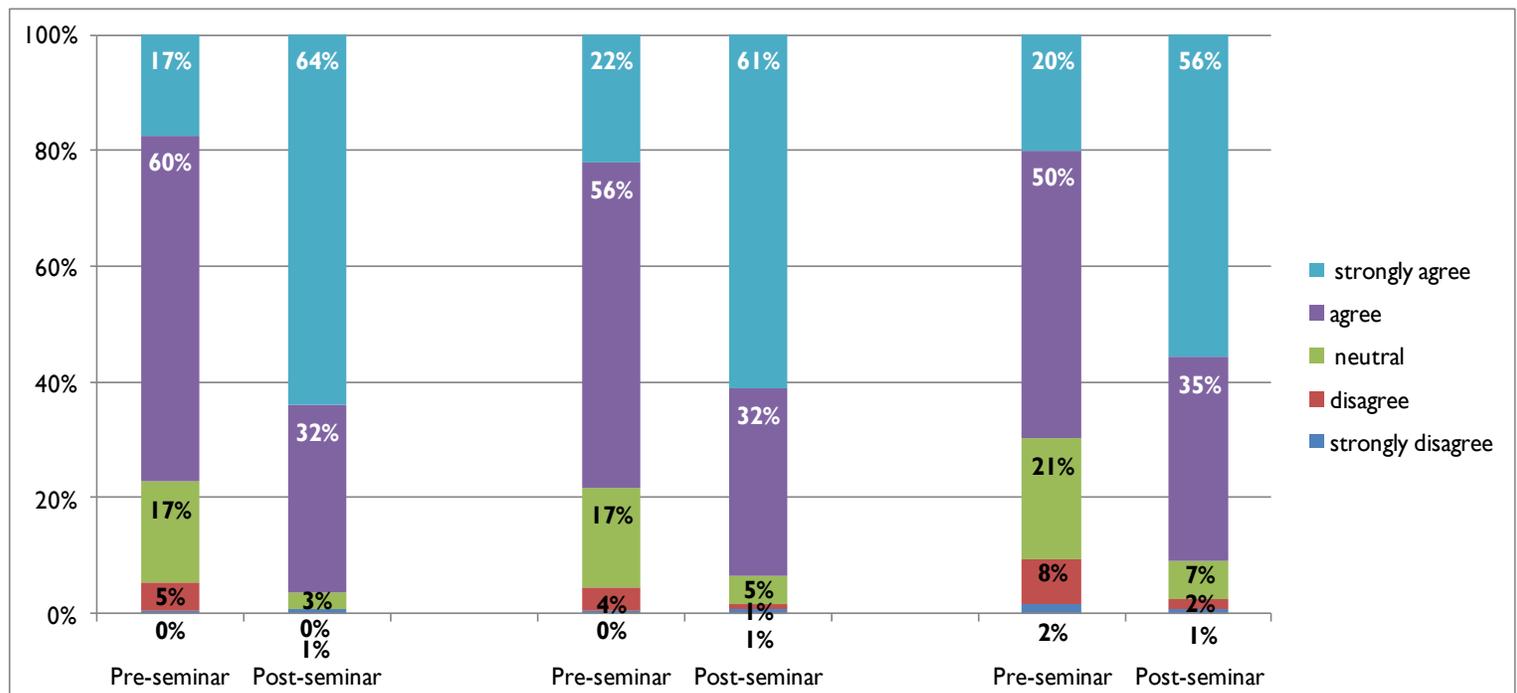
### Proven Impact on Teacher Self-Efficacy for Teaching Literacy Skills Aligned to State Standards

Summer 2014: I know how to create a class where students have opportunities to... (n=321)

...build their knowledge through content-rich non-fiction (p=5.23<sup>-32</sup>)

...ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence from text (both literary and informational) (p=3.67<sup>-22</sup>)

...gain regular practice with complex text and academic language (p=2.34<sup>-22</sup>)



# Impacts on Students: Historical Understanding & Academic Engagement

## **i** Gold-Standard Study

This randomized controlled study of high school students studying *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior* included 1,371 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from eight regions of the US.

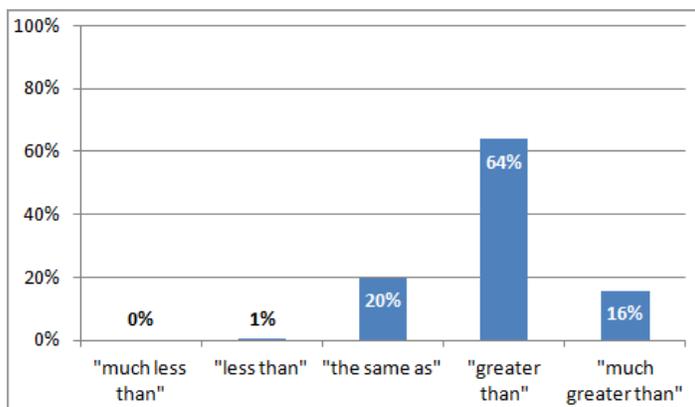
On a performance measure of historical understanding using seven historical documents, students were asked to interpret and integrate information about inter-ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990's and to select items that they believe best explained aspects of what took place during that conflict.

Facing History students demonstrated **significantly stronger skills for historical analysis** of agency, evidence, and causation than did the control group. (Barr et al., 2015)

## Facing History Engages Students

After using what they learned in a Facing History workshop or seminar, teachers (n=197) reported:

*My students' level of engagement in my Facing History lesson(s) or unit(s) is \_\_\_\_ their engagement in other lessons.*



(Barr et al., 2015)

## Facing History Partner School Promotes Academic Motivation and Self-Efficacy

At a low-performing urban school in the midst of a massive effort to improve school culture, we surveyed 247 students in representing 40% of the student body across all grades. "This class" refers to a Facing History-infused humanities class.

- 72% of students rated, "This class has **motivated me to work harder in school**," as "mostly true" or "completely true".
- 71% of students rated, "Because of my participation in this class, **I am writing with more confidence**," as "mostly true" or "completely true".

(Romer & Barr, 2018)

## Alumni of a Facing History Partner School Surpass Peers in College Enrollment and Persistence

A study of alumni of an in-depth urban/suburban magnet school founded with Facing History at its core found meaningful academic and civic outcomes. The student pool is 82% students of color and 68% eligible for free or reduced lunch.

- Every graduate since its first graduating class in 2007 has been **accepted** by at least one college.
- **80% were enrolled in college** at any time during the first two years after graduation, in contrast to 67% in the district.
- **85% of enrolled students persisted** from the first to the second year of college (class of 2010) compared to 75% of students in the district; 80% from a national sample of high minority, urban, low income schools; and 88% among low minority, higher income schools.

(Romer et al., 2014)

## Facing History Students are Motivated to Learn

A quasi-experimental study conducted at a high school in Palm Beach County, Florida compared 417 Facing History 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students to 131 of their peers in 31 classes. Compared to their peers, Facing History students were:

- 94% more likely to report that **their class motivated them to learn**.
- 90% more likely to report that **their class used interesting and engaging reading materials**.

(Sechser, Barr, et al., 2005)

*"Historical cases of social injustice can be taught in a way that helps students to integrate their natural inclination for **ethical reflection with the intellectual rigor required of historical understanding**."*

(Selman & Bellino, 2011)

## Facing History Promotes Literacy Skills Aligned with State Standards

- 95% of Facing History elective teachers in Memphis agreed or strongly agreed that their elective course **promoted their students' abilities to build their knowledge** through content-rich nonfiction.
- 91% of the elective teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the course **promoted their students' abilities to ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence** from text.

(Romer & Makransky, 2015)

## **i** Facing History Improves Social, Emotional, and Ethical Awareness

A district-wide, randomized controlled study demonstrated statistically significant increases in 7<sup>th</sup> grade students' **empathy, prosocial behavior, civic attitudes**, and decreases in aggression compared to a control group. After two years of exposure to Facing History, students, now in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, were **less likely than a control group to endorse bystanding and more likely to intervene in bullying situations.**

(Domitrovich et al., 2014)

*"Social-Emotional Learning helps students become good communicators, cooperative members of a team, effective leaders, and caring, concerned members of their communities. It teaches them how to set and achieve goals and how to persist in the face of challenges."*

- CASEL

## Study Demonstrates how Facing History Fosters Social and Moral Dispositions

A study at a Facing History Partner School tapped more than three quarters of all students in grades 10 - 12 (n=137). The students described **valuing different opinions** and articulated connections between history and their own lives. They repeatedly affirmed the **values of agency, upstanding (standing up against injustice), and participation.** The theme of respect and empathy for others also stood out.

(Romer, 2011)

## Facing History Jewish Partner Schools Project Helps Students Develop a Jewish Identity Centered on Ethical Values and Community Connections

63 teachers from eight Jewish Day Schools were asked about how the presence of Facing History in their schools has affected their students. Teachers described an enhanced focus on values such as upstanding, social justice, helping others, and responsibility to the larger community.

Teachers reported positive behavioral changes in their students and attributed them to the incorporation of Facing History values into their school. The **common vocabulary** of "upstander", "bystander", and "universe of obligation" helped students and teachers connect values to their everyday lives. One teacher wrote that FH was most helpful...

*"...by providing a context, resources, vocabulary, and experiences through which difficult topics can be examined in meaningful ways that equip students with a better understanding of the world in which they live and how they can make that world a better place."*

(Barr & Leonard, 2012)

*"I love our [Facing History] genocide course... With this course we are able to identify ourselves and others in a much more...specific way without excluding and separating, whether it be physical or mental."*

- Student in a Toronto District School Board High School  
(Romer, 2013)

## Facing History Bolsters Agency, Empathy, Critical Thinking, and Social Awareness

535 Students who studied Facing History across five studies 2009-2013, from diverse contexts (Jewish day schools, public, charter, across social classes, in Canada and the US), report that Facing History consistently impacts critical thinking and a range of social-emotional dispositions. Below are their aggregate scores on a range of these impacts.

- 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that this course increased their capacity to **stand up for what they believe in**, even when others disagree.
- 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that this course increased their capacity to **think critically about issues of racism and prejudice.**
- 74% of students agreed or strongly agreed that this course increased their capacity to **understand and feel for people who are different from them.**
- 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that this course increased their capacity to **get along well with different types of people.**

## Members of a UK Student Leadership Group Demonstrate Strong Civic Engagement

From 2016 to 2018, dozens of students from across London participated in a civic-oriented student leadership group. After participating in the group for several 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 **assist 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**.
- 89% agreed or strongly agreed that, when thinking about problems in society, it is important to **focus on the causes**.

*“When schools provide the kind of opportunities that allow students to learn and practice a variety of **civic skills**... Then we see increases in both students’ commitment to and capacity for **future participation**.”*  
(Kahne & Middaugh, 2008)

*“Facing History and Ourselves was an amazing thing to have as a high school student... That class got me to think about **how our history has shaped our present** and how it is shaping our future. It also taught me that singular actions can affect more than just that one person or thing. There really is a **ripple effect** to everything we do, or don’t do in some cases, and how big that ripple is we... may not know until later down the line.”*

- Alumna from an in-depth Facing History school  
(Romer et al., 2014)

## **i** Rigorous Study shows that Facing History Promotes Tolerance and Civic Efficacy

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

- **Promoted respect and tolerance** for the rights of others whose views differ from one’s own.
- **Fostered awareness** of the power and danger of prejudice and discrimination.
- Increased students’ sense of **civic efficacy**—the capacity to make a difference in society.

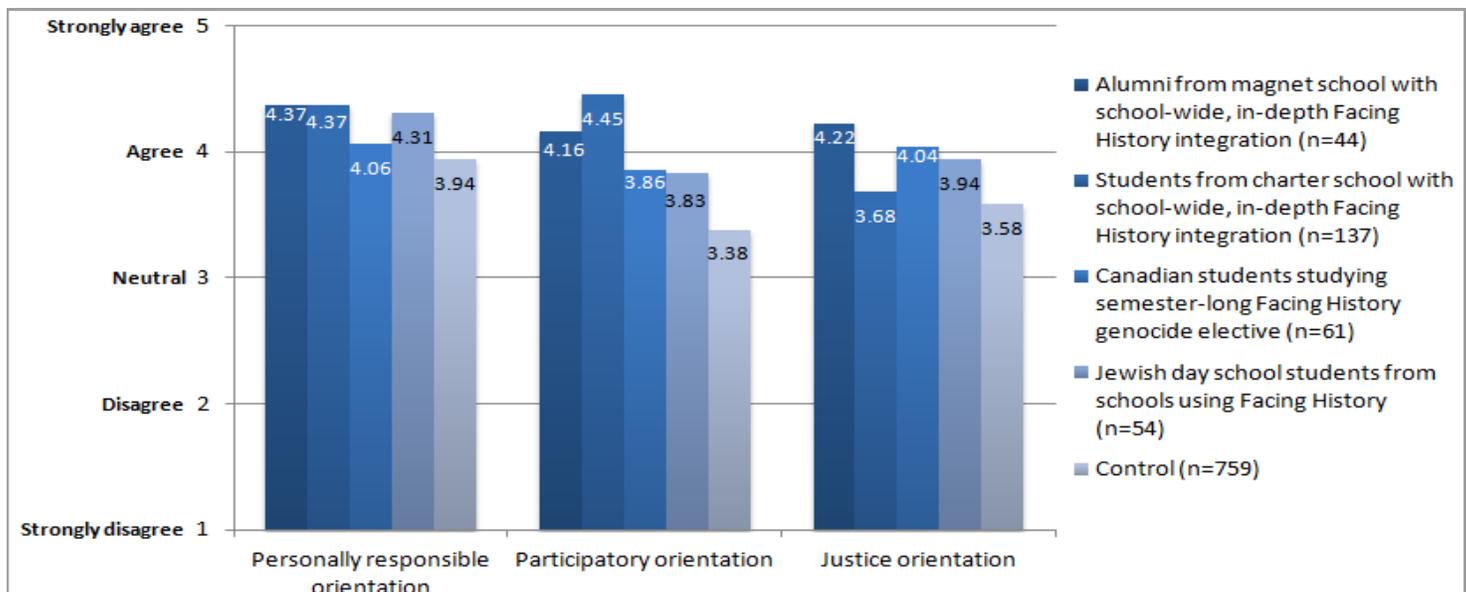
The sample included 1,371 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from eight regions of the US.

(Barr et al., 2015)

## Facing History Students Score Consistently High on Civic Responsibility Index

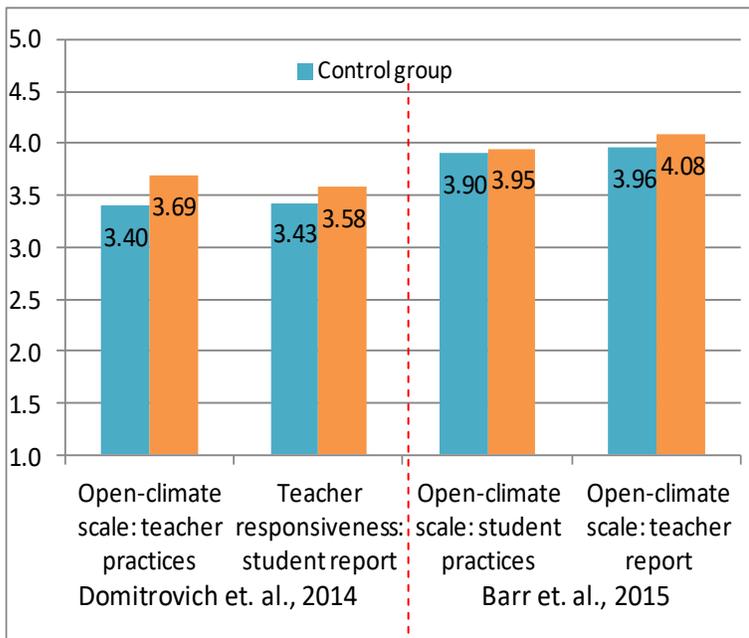
A model and instrument developed by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) describes three types of responsible civic participation: **personally responsible**, **participatory**, and **justice-oriented citizens**. All types of civic responsibility are critical for effective citizenry and democracy.

High school students studying Facing History across a range of contexts **score higher than control high school students** from a national study on all three types of civic responsibility.



## 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)

## Quasi-experimental Study Shows Impact on Growth Mindset and Climate

This study sought to examine the impact of studying the Facing History semester-long elective "Holocaust and Human Development" across a range of outcomes at three urban schools, two of which were Partner Schools. We surveyed 160 students from 13 classes (7 FH, 6 comparison electives at same schools whose teachers had not participated in FH professional development).

We administered the same survey twice, once six weeks into the semester (time one) and once at the end of November (time two).

- At both time one and time two, Facing History students **endorsed growth mindset** to a significantly stronger degree than comparison students.
- At time one, Facing History students rated their classrooms as having a **more open climate** based on teacher practices (more inclusive, respectful, interactive, and deliberative).
- At time two, Facing History students endorsed one item on the open climate scale to a significantly stronger degree: "The teacher encourages students to **discuss political and social topics about which people have different opinions.**"

(Romer & Byun, 2017)

## Students at Facing History Partner School Rate School Climate Positively

152 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that adults **in their school care about them**.

(Barr & Becker, 2018)

## Facing History Improves Schools

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 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> 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, 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 assume that all their students can and will learn, as well as to develop among those teachers the skills, attitudes, and knowledge to create classrooms in which students then do so. 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.

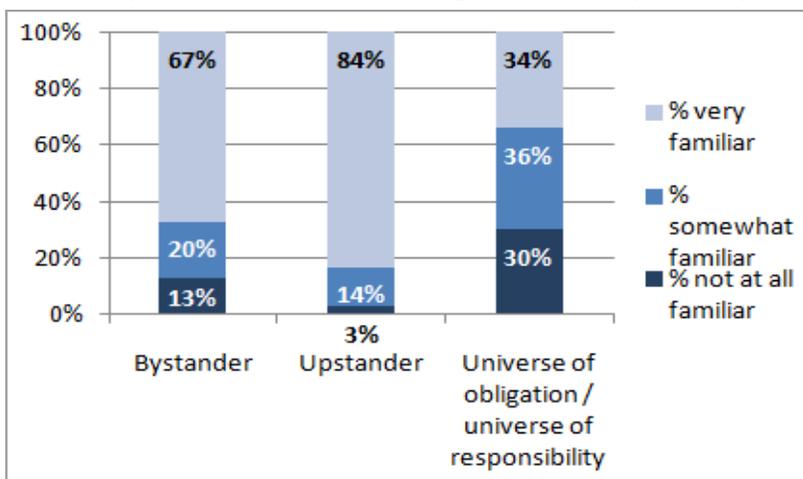
(Romer & Barr, 2018)

## Facing History Strengthens School Culture

A May 2018 study of a Chicago Middle School that has partnered with Facing History since summer 2015 canvassed 152 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Student impacts included a school-wide high level of academic motivation.

- 73% agreed or strongly agreed **“I feel motivated to work hard in school”** (mean score: 4.11 out of 5)

Students school-wide demonstrated a high level of awareness of vocabulary for ethical decision making and social responsibility.



(Barr & Becker, 2018)