

THE DELIBERATING IN A DEMOCRACY (DID) PROJECT

EVALUATION REPORT: CUMULATIVE YEARS 1-5

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by:

Patricia G. Avery, Professor

Sara A. Levy, Research Assistant

Annette M. M. Simmons, Research Assistant¹

150 Peik Hall
159 Pillsbury Drive, SE
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455
USA

July 20, 2009

Please share comments with Patricia G. Avery at avery001@umn.edu and/or Sara Levy at levyx066@umn.edu

¹ We are very grateful for the assistance of the following translators: Arnoldas Blumberg (Lithuanian), Afet Dadashova (Azeri), Afet Huseynova (Azeri and Russian), Mari Kangur (Estonian), David Karner (Estonian), Anatoly Naumov (Russian), Dan Necas (Czech), Elena Shurkina (Russian), Marta Tkacova (Czech), Austėja Vidugiryte (Lithuanian), and Diana Yefanova (Russian). We also very much appreciate the participation of the DID teachers, students, and staff in the evaluation component of the *DID Project*.

Executive Summary

The primary purpose of the *Deliberating in a Democracy (DID) Project* is to train secondary teachers to use a model of deliberation in their classrooms, and for their students to learn to deliberate about significant public issues. Other components of the project include the online Discussion Board for teachers and students, videoconferences between partner sites, and teacher exchanges.

This evaluation report focuses on Years One through Five of the *DID Project*, during which participants included teachers and students at seven European and five U.S. sites (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participating Sites

Site	Year(s) Participated
Azerbaijan	1-5
Czech Republic	1-5
Estonia	2-5
Kaluga, Russia	2-5
Lithuania	1-5
Moscow, Russia	2-5
Serbia	4
Chicago Metro	1-5
Columbia, South Carolina	2-5
Denver Metro	2-5
Fairfax County, Virginia	1-5
Los Angeles Metro	1-5

The evaluation report is based on multiple types of data (documents, interviews, observations, surveys) collected from multiple sources (students, teachers, school administrators, site coordinators, project directors). Major findings include the following:

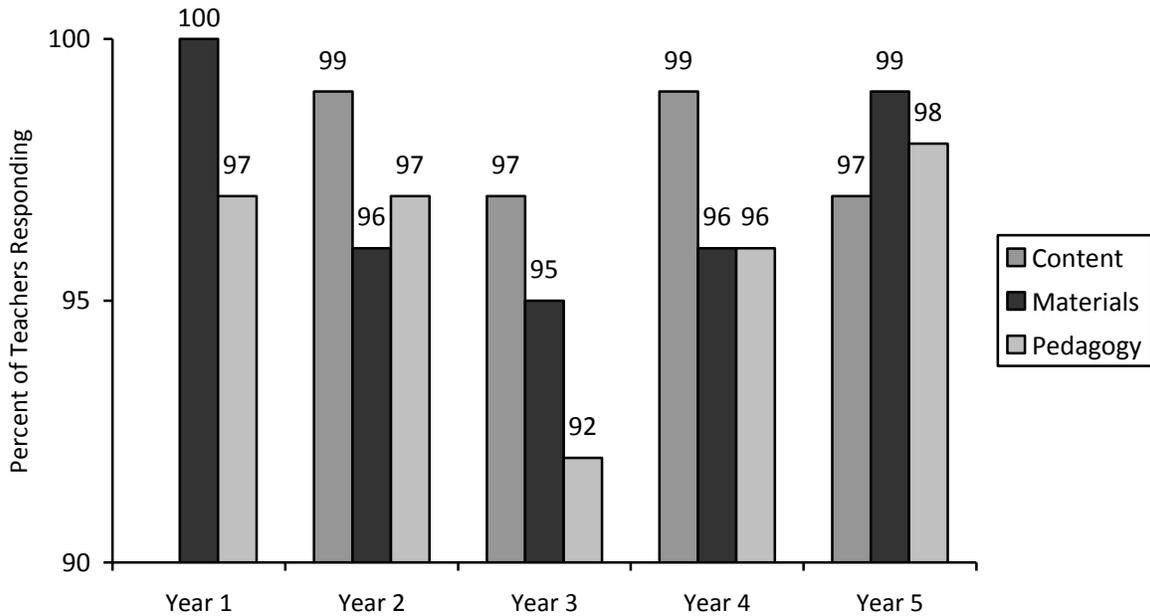
- Approximately 380 teachers (years 1-5) participated in the professional development workshops to learn a model of deliberation, the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC).
- The teachers rated the workshops effective in terms of: content (97-99%, years 2-5), materials (95-100%, years 1-5), and pedagogy (92-98%, years 1-5) (see Table 2).
- Teachers believed that after their involvement in the DID Project, they had enough skill to effectively conduct deliberations. Across years 1-5, between 94-99% indicated they would continue to use deliberation in their classrooms during and after their participation in the project (see Table 3).
- Over 92% of the teachers (92-94%, years 2-5) believed that their participation in the project has deepened their understanding of democracy (see Table 3).

- Teachers consistently (years 2-5) found the Site Coordinators to be the most helpful sources of support during their implementation of deliberation. The lack of adequate time available for conducting deliberations was the leading difficulty cited by teachers (years 2-5).
- 218 (years 1-5)² teachers participated in teacher exchanges with their partner site. For many teachers, the experience greatly enhanced their worldview.
- Student participation in the DID Project increased from approximately 1,118 students in Year One to approximately 5,200 students in Year Five.
- In Years 2-5, the teachers reported that “almost all” of their students engaged in critical thinking (93-100%) and were respectful of one another’s views (93-100%) during the deliberations (see Table 4).
- In Years 2-4, students reported that they learned a lot from (83-87%) and enjoyed the deliberations (83-89%), developed a better understanding of the issues (87-88%), and increased their abilities to state their opinions (79-81%) (see Table 5).
- In Years 2-4, 64-76% of students agreed with the statement, “because of my participation in the deliberations, I am more confident talking about controversial issues with my peers” (see Table 5).
- Over Years 2-5, an average of approximately 670 students (468-789), or 16% of all students each year (11-20%), participated in the videoconferences. Teachers (94-96%, years 2-5) felt that the videoconferences were effective (see Table 6), while students reported that they both enjoyed (88-90%, years 3-4) and learned a lot from (77-78%, years 3-4) the videoconferences.
- In Years 2-4, 53-61% of students reported participating in online discussions. Of students registered on the discussion board (11,306 users total), 48% did not post, while another 13% posted once and 24% posted 2-5 times (years 2-5). The discussion board was beset by technical problems, lack of computer access, and the lag time between student posts.
- Still, students who reported participating on the discussion board felt that they learned a lot from the experience (66-70%, years 3-4), and that they enjoyed the online discussions (84-87%, years 3-4). Teachers (59-85%, years 1-5) felt that the online interactions were effective (see Table 6).
- A comparison of pre- and post-survey responses showed that, after participating in the DID Project, significantly **more** students reported:
 - knowing more about politics than most people their age (years 1-4)
 - being able to understand most political issues easily (years 1-4)
 - they usually had something to say when political issues or problems were being discussed (years 2-4)
 - they were interested in politics (year 4)
- Students reported that the number of discussions about controversial issues with the following groups **increased** after participating in the DID Project:

² This number is larger than the number of individual teachers who visited another country as part of the DID Project, because some teachers participated in the exchanges multiple years.

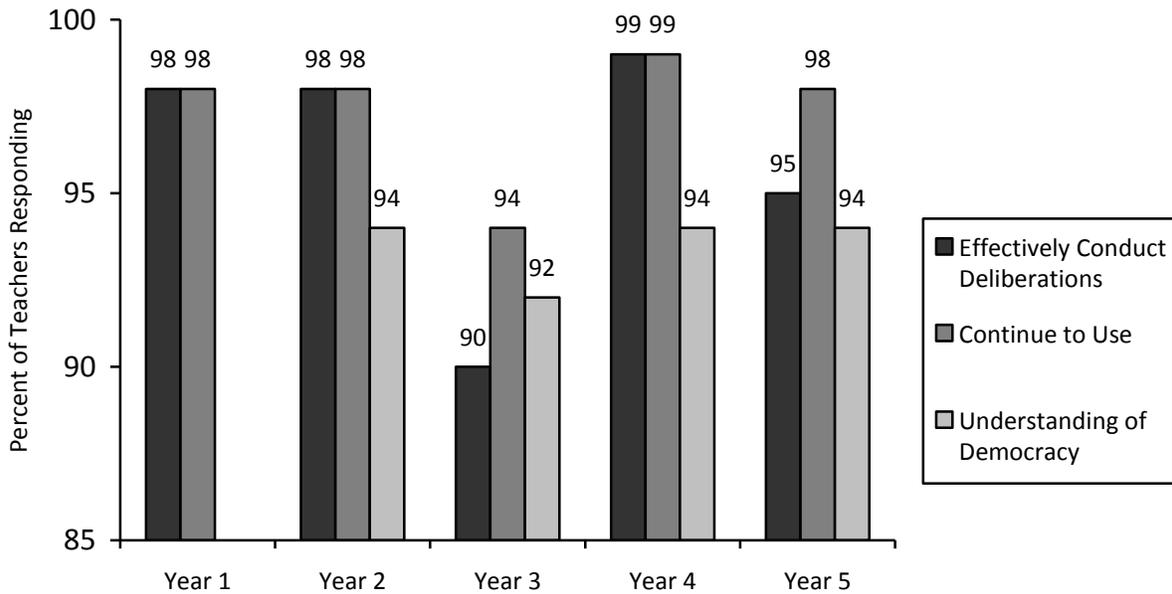
- teachers (years 2-4)
 - peers (years 2, 4)
 - family members (year 4)
- In Years 3 and 4, 54-68% of students reported that they discussed the deliberations with their families. European students (57-73%, years 3-4) were more likely to do so than were their US counterparts (49-64%, years 3-4) (see Table 7).
 - In Years 3 and 4, 65-71% of students reported that they discussed the deliberations with their peers. European students (73-78%, years 3-4) were more likely to do so than were their US counterparts (53-66%, years 3-4) (see Table 8).

Table 2. Teachers' Ratings of the Quality of DID Professional Development



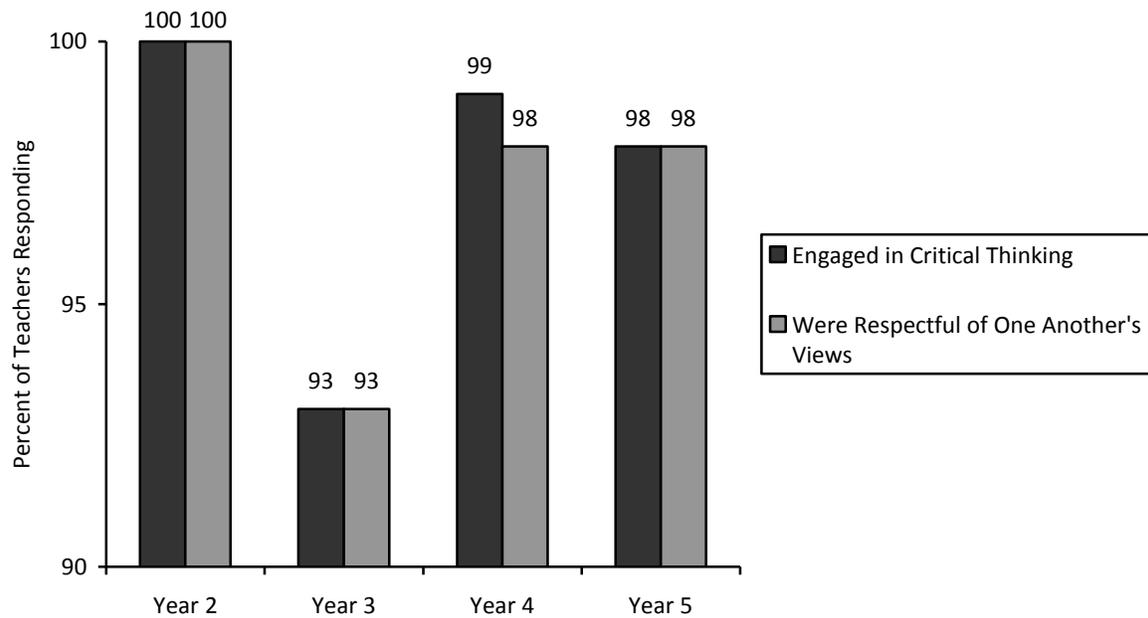
Note: Teachers were not asked survey questions about content until Year 2, therefore no data are available for Year 1 in this area. The number of teachers who answered survey questions ranged from 50 in Year 1 to 139 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 3. Impact of the DID Project on Teachers



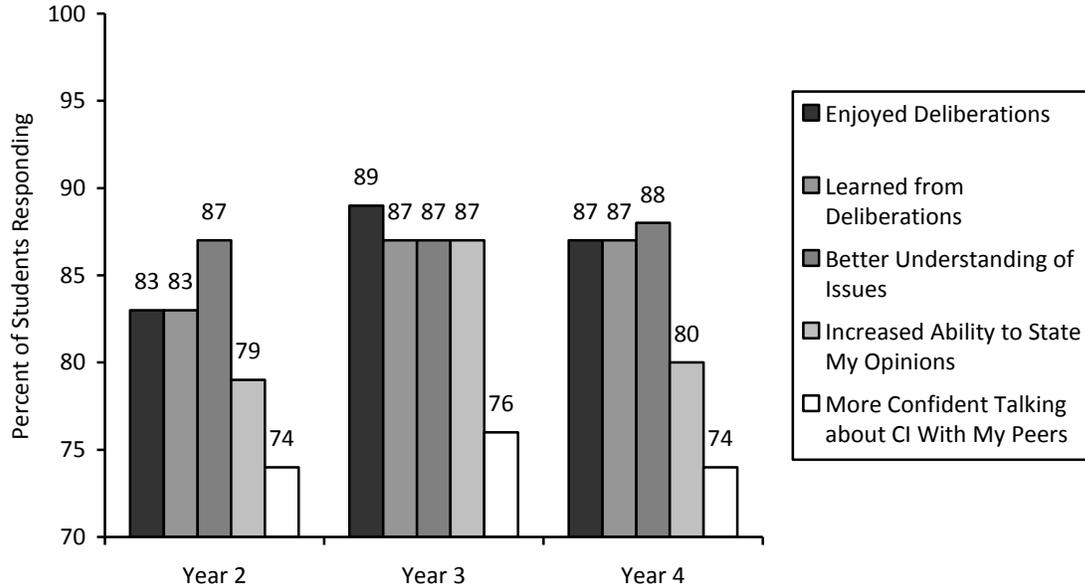
Note: Teachers were not asked whether their participation in the DID Project impacted their understanding of democracy until Year 2, therefore no data are available for Year 1 in this area. The number of teachers who answered survey questions ranged from 49 in Year 1 to 138 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 4. Teachers' Reports of Student Learning



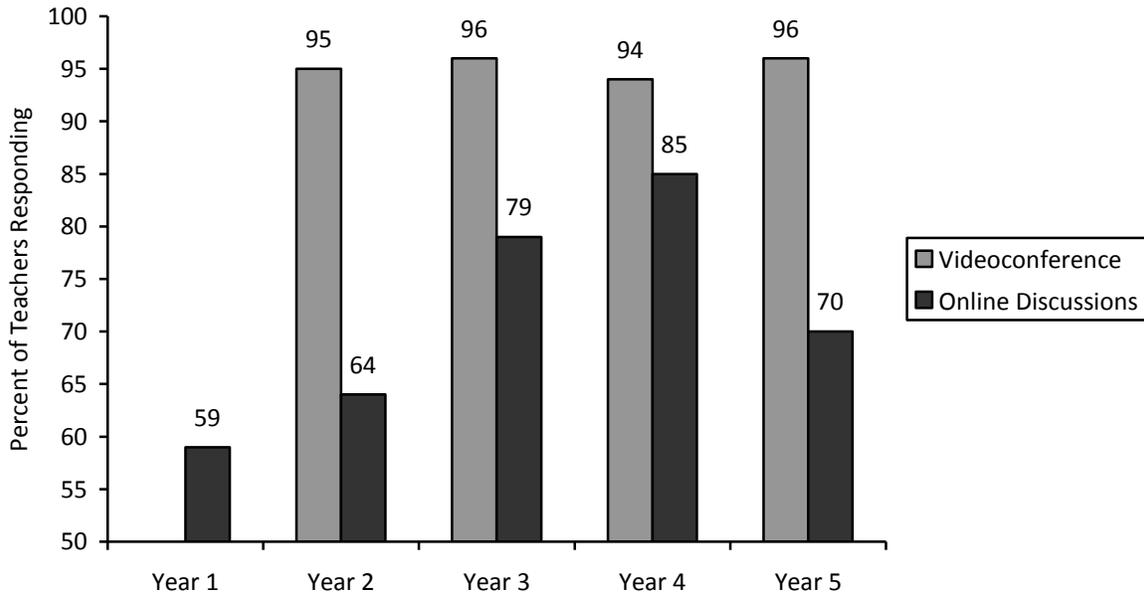
Note: Teachers were not asked survey questions about student learning until Year 2, therefore no data are available for Year 1 in this area. The number of teachers who answered survey questions ranged from 47 in Year 2 to 137 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 5. Students' Experiences with Deliberations (self-report)



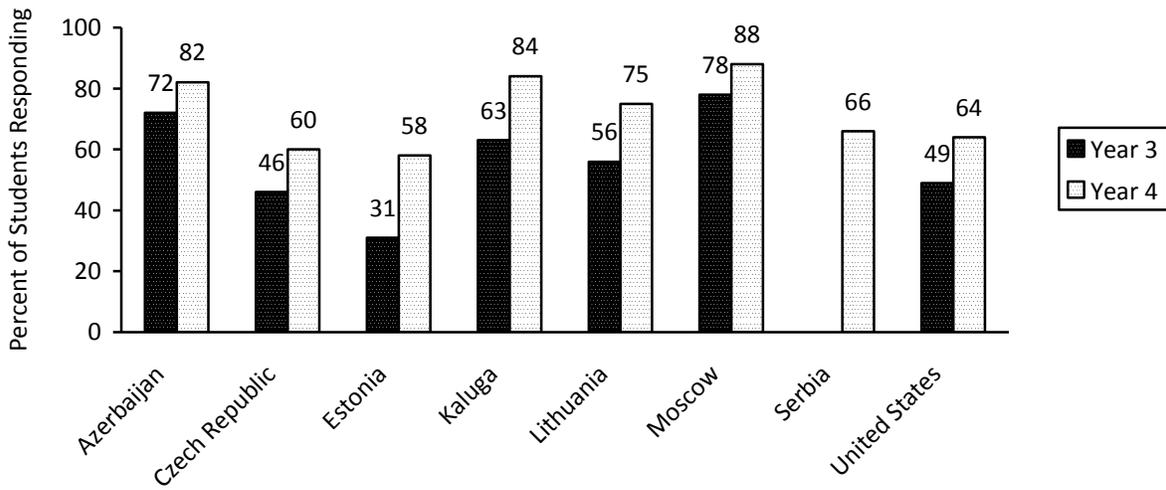
Note: Students were not asked survey questions about their experiences with deliberation in Years 1 and 5, therefore no data are available for those years in this area. The number of students who answered survey questions ranged from 1,959 in Year 2 to 2,604 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 6. Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Videoconference and Online Discussions



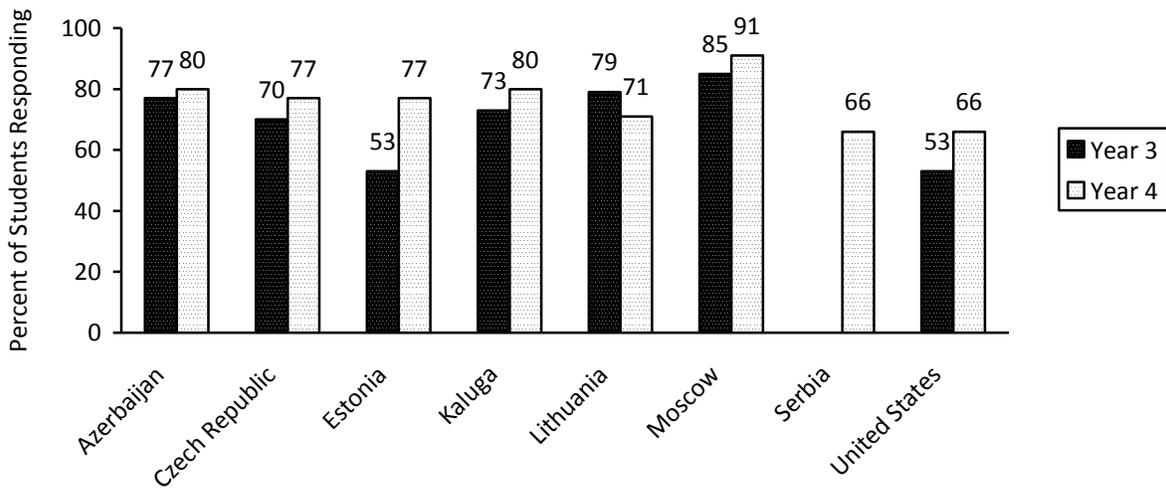
Note: Teachers were not asked about the effectiveness of the videoconferences until Year 2, therefore no data are available for Year 1 in this area. The number of teachers who answered survey questions ranged from 29 in Year 1 to 108 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 7. Students' Discussions about Deliberations with Family Members



Note: Students were not asked survey questions about discussing deliberations with family in Years 1, 2, or 5, therefore no data are available for those years in this area. Serbia did not join the DID Project until Year 4, therefore no data are available for that site in Year 3. The number of students who answered survey questions ranged from 2,031 in Year 3 to 2,540 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.

Table 8. Students' Discussions about Deliberations with Peers



Note: Students were not asked survey questions about discussing deliberations with peers in Years 1, 2, or 5, therefore no data are available for those years in this area. Serbia did not join the DID Project until Year 4, therefore no data are available for that site in Year 3. The number of students who answered survey questions ranged from 2,024 in Year 3 to 2,540 in Year 4; for more specific numbers, please contact the authors.