



Jewish Summit on Civics 2024

Interim After-Action Report

Prepared By
A More Perfect Union

Program Overview

The Jewish Summit on Civics was A More Perfect Union's first in-person gathering and our first foray into supporting the emergence of a Jewish civic learning field (see a [mid-stream version of our concept note](#) that details planned outcomes for the program). The Summit brought together 21 A More Perfect Union partners, including educational institutions, advocacy organizations, synagogues, community centers, and museums, representing a diverse array of approaches, expertises, denominations, geographies, and constituencies. Participants came to Washington, D.C. on March 11-13, 2024 to learn about the latest ideas and innovations in the field of civic learning, and to explore ways to bring effective civic learning to Jewish contexts.



We kicked off the Summit on Monday with a [Jeffersonian Dinner](#) to build relationships and prepare for [Civic Learning Week's National Forum](#).

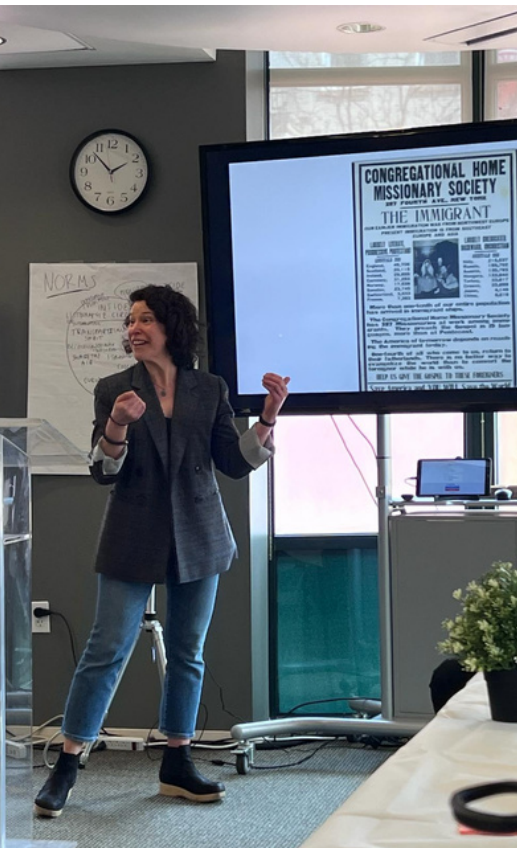
On Tuesday, we joined 300 civics education researchers, funders, and practitioners for briefings, perspectives and conversations on the current state and future of civic learning in the United States. Highlights of the day included a conversation between Supreme Court Justices Amy Coney Barrett and Sonia Sotomayor ([video recording of that session available online](#) starting at 35:30), and a fireside chat between Archivist of the United States Colleen Joy Shogan and U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.



On Wednesday, we reconvened at our partner Hillel International's Washington headquarters to metabolize our learnings from the previous day, hear a provocative presentation on the value proposition of civic learning in Jewish contexts from Dr. Rivka Press Schwartz of SAR High School in the Bronx, and envision the future of civic learning in Jewish contexts.

Among the highlights of Day 3 were six "Steal This!" sessions, in which partners shared civic learning practices that they're implementing in their communities.

We've compiled these six practices – along with 13 others submitted by our partners – into "Steal This! Innovative Ideas and Approaches to Civic Learning in Jewish Spaces," which we've shared with all of our partners and which is now also [available on The Jewish Educator Portal](#).



Key Takeaways

“It was such an honor to be a part of a field think tank on Jewish Civic Engagement and Education. To learn and vision simultaneously is a gift.”

Regarding the Field

- There is consensus that civic learning and engagement are vital to a functioning U.S. democracy, and that Jewish institutions have a responsibility to engage in civic learning in their own contexts.
- Questions remain about what civic learning and engagement look like in practice, including the role of Jewish professionals in promoting it in Jewish spaces.
- The civic learning field is quite nascent, and the field of the Jewish civic learning even more so. Until both fields mature, efforts to promote civic learning in Jewish spaces may be slow and difficult to measure or scale. A “laboratory” approach of experimentation, peer review, and dissemination through a collective impact network may catalyze field maturation.
- The civic learning field largely focuses on educational institutions. There is a hunger for resources and recommendations applicable to a diverse array of Jewish institutions, including synagogues, JCCs, and advocacy organizations.

Regarding the Summit

- Participants found the mix of attendees valuable and stimulating, and enjoyed networking and learning with one another.
- Participants mostly kept their “organization hats” on – they did not think of their role in the context of “field building,” and were instead mostly concerned with applying the Summit’s learnings to their own contexts.
- Participants largely valued the Civic Learning Week (CLW) National Forum programming, and particularly enjoyed hearing from the Justices.
- Several attendees expressed some disappointment at the relative paucity of research, lack of integration with other CLW participants, and a dearth of actionable recommendations from speakers applicable to their contexts coming out of CLW.

- Participants held divergent views on what A More Perfect Union's role in the field should be going forward. Some seemed satisfied with us in a facilitator role, while others felt that A More Perfect Union should take a driving role in producing thought leadership and resources on the subject of civic learning in Jewish contexts.
- Participants were largely appreciative of A More Perfect Union's role and execution in convening and leading the Summit, and spoke highly of the staff and program. There were some concerns about logistics, primarily regarding food on Day 2 and hotel accommodations.

Participant Reflections

94%

agree that they gained a better understanding of why civic learning in Jewish contexts matters.

94%

agreed the Summit helped them build relationships with other A More Perfect Union network partners.

100%

of attendees are interested in participating in ongoing thought leadership in the field of Jewish civic learning.

88%

agreed they acquired useful practices, strategies, and tools from the civic learning field to apply in Jewish contexts.



100%

agree they feel a deeper commitment to championing civic learning in their institutions.

Next Steps

We're reconvening the Jewish Summit on Civics planning committee in early April to help us discern our highest-value opportunities to build on the momentum from the Jewish Summit on Civics, and we'll share our emerging plans with you as they coalesce.

Thank you so much for your support and, as always, please feel free to reach out with any questions!



“This was an incredible learning experience for me... I’m leaving this experience feeling compelled to dive deeper into the ways I myself can become a more knowledgeable and engaged American citizen, as well as the ways that my organization can contribute to enhancing civic knowledge and engagement in the Jewish world.”