

# Community Report Card

*Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County through data and indicators*



The above illustration represents the Natural, Built, Economic, and Social environments. They are represented as a streetscape to highlight that despite being identified as separate environments, they interact to make up the whole of Sarasota County.

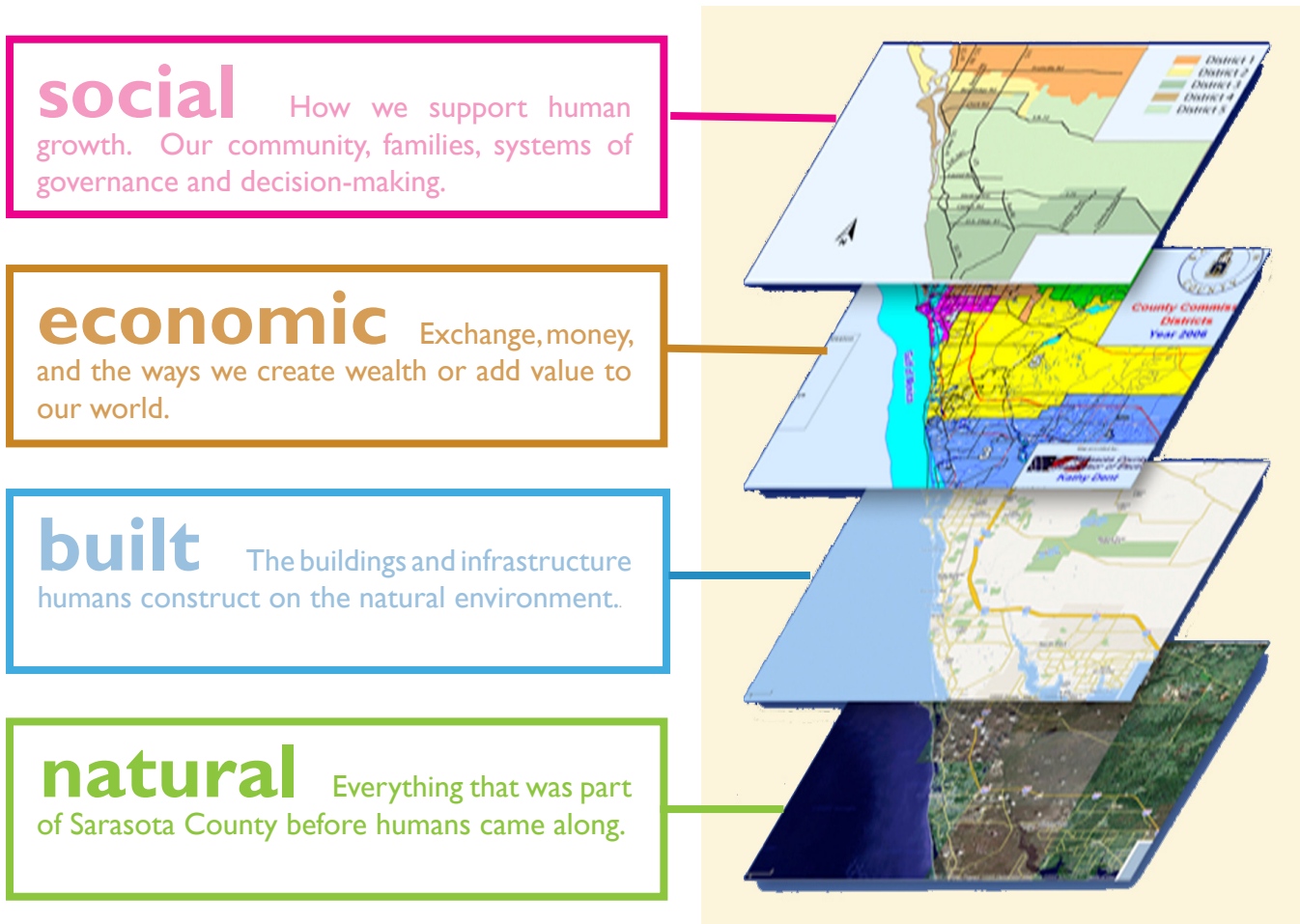
## The Social Environment

*How we support human growth.  
Our community, families, systems of  
governance and decision making.*

## 2007-2008 Community Report Card: Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County

From August 2007 through August 2008, SCOPE's *Community Report Card* will use data about our community to share information about Sarasota County's quality of life. The *Community Report Card* hopes to ask and answer questions about our community and encourages you to do the same.

The next year is split into four sections, or environments: the natural, built, economic, and social. Each environment is highlighted for three months, and each month will focus on a different indicator, or data set, that reveals information about our community. The indicators will use data to tell a story about a different aspect of life in Sarasota County.



Graphic from the Florida House Institute for Sustainable Development

Through learning about these data and what they tell us our community can put together a picture of our quality of life. Throughout the coming year SCOPE will highlight community gatherings and sources of more information on our website. If you enjoy reading the *Community Report Card* and know someone else who you think would as well, please forward this to them! If you would like to learn more, SCOPE encourages you to download these supplements. You can find more information about the supplements and the whole report on our website at [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org). If you have immediate questions, comments or reactions to what you have just read, please email Kate Irwin at [kirwin@scopexcel.org](mailto:kirwin@scopexcel.org).

## Question:

***“How well do Sarasota County’s public schools educate our children and young adults?”***

**C**halkboards. Cafeteria lunches. School buses and spelling bees. Creating dioramas and going to recess. Reading, writing, and... well, you know the rest.

Each of these words conjures up images of school today and school days of the past. They are also part of this month’s indicator, which focuses on education. Schooling and education are things that almost every adult has in common. Most of us were educated at least partly in the public school system, and some of our best childhood memories happened in a classroom.

As we grew up and out of the classroom and made our own homes in Sarasota County, many of us continue to value education. This value is evident in the many classes, lectures and seminars offered in Sarasota County. In addition to our dedication to learning at any age, we also see the value of a good primary and secondary education, and we most often rely on a public school to provide this. There are 40 public schools in Sarasota County - this indicator examines the education of our public schoolchildren.

## Indicator:

# ***Education in Sarasota County’s public schools***

**This indicator measures** education in our public schools. This segment of the Community Report Card will examine education through four different but related, measures: School Stability, High School Dropout Rate, High School Graduation Rate, and Per Pupil Expenditures

## SCHOOL STABILITY

**These numbers tell us** that the percentage of stable students is highest in elementary (avg. 93.8%) and middle school (avg. 93.6%), then drops in high school (avg. 91.8%). These numbers have been constant since the 2002-2003 school year.

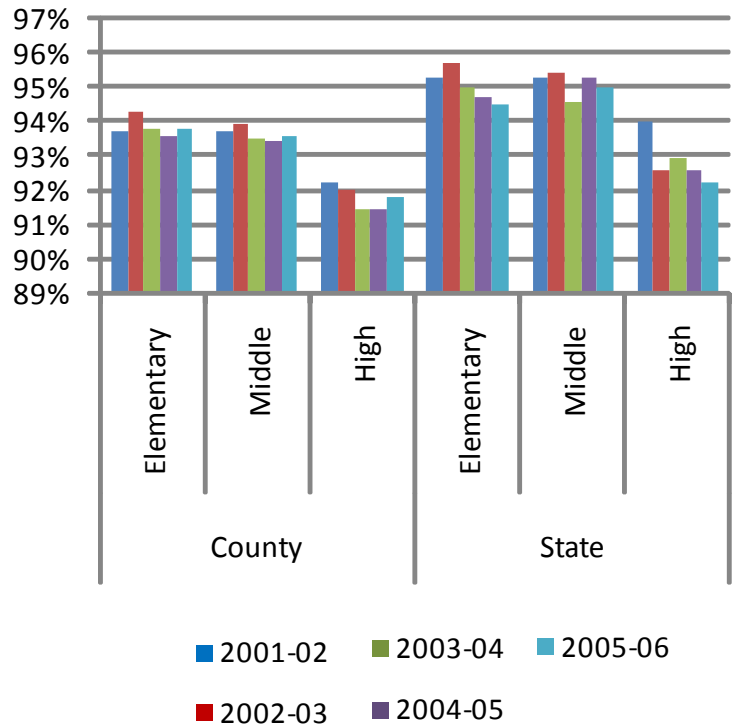
### How do we compare?

The percentage of stable students in Sarasota County is lower than the state's. The average stability level for Florida is higher than for Sarasota County by 1.2% (elementary), 1.5% (middle) and 1.1% (high).

### How is this measured?

This is the percentage of public school students from the October student count who are at the same school in February of that year. The numbers come from the Florida Department of Education's student database.

School Stability



## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

**These numbers tell us** that from 2001-2006 our average graduation rate was 73%. The average graduation rate is 84% for Asian students, 76% for white students, 57% for Hispanic students and 47% for black students.

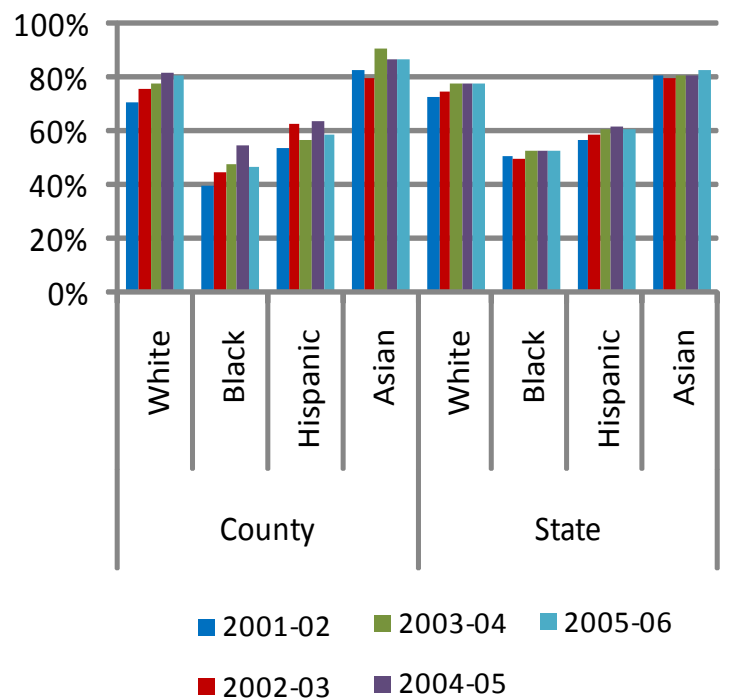
### How do we compare?

Our average graduation rate (2001-2006) is above the state for white and Asian students, but below the state for black and Hispanic students.

### How is this measured?

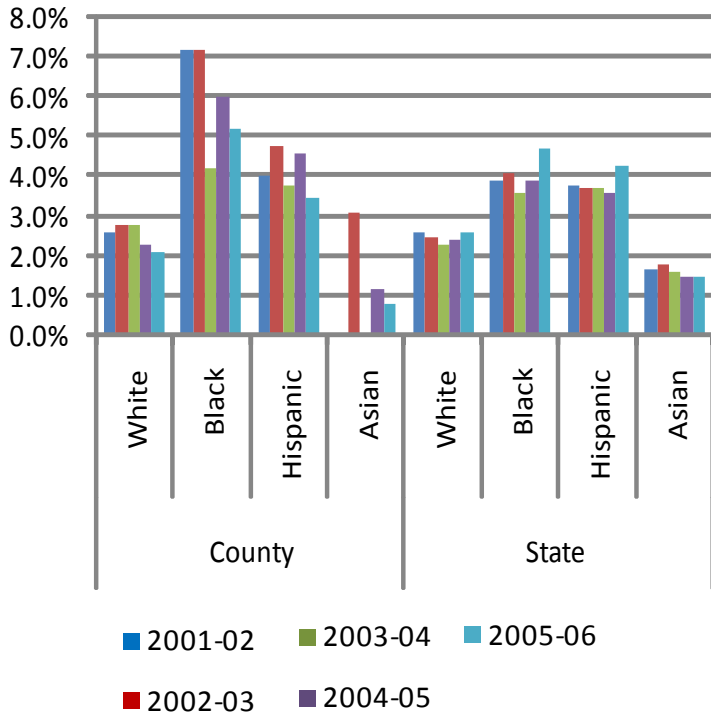
Graduates include students who receive a standard high school diploma or GED certificate. The data come from the Florida Department of Education's student database. This is a 4 year cohort measure (see "Reservations and Caveats" for more information).

High School Graduation Rate



## HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE

### High School Dropout Rate



**These numbers tell us** that the Sarasota County dropout rate has declined in the last five years. The dropout rate for 2005-2006 is 2.9%, down from 4.5% in 2002-2003. The average dropout rate over the last five years was 3.4%.

### How do we compare?

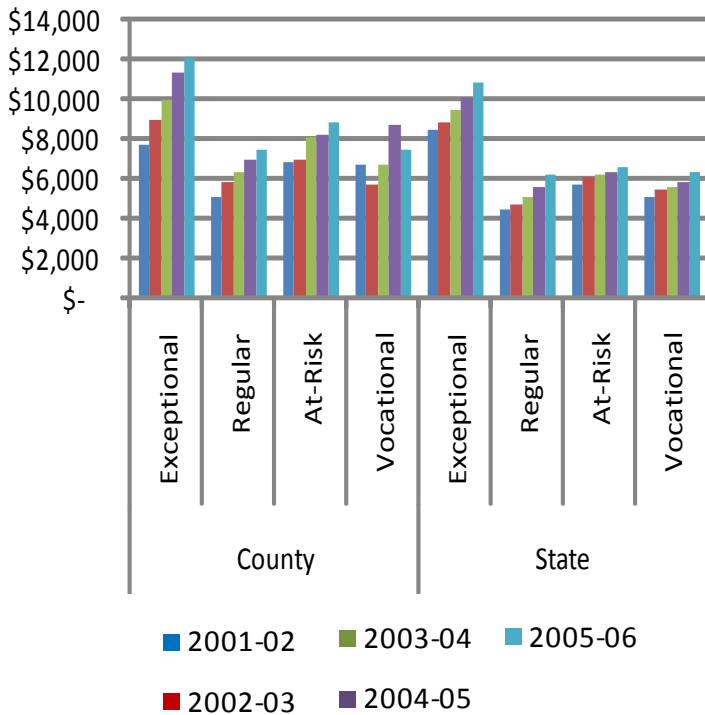
In 3 of the last 5 years, Sarasota County had a higher dropout rate than the state. For black students, our dropout rate is an average of 2 percent higher than Florida's. For all other minorities, Sarasota County's dropout rate is the same or lower than the state's.

### How is this measured?

Dropouts are 9th-12th graders who leave school without enrolling in another program prior to end of the school year. Data is from the Florida Department of Education's student database.

## PER PUPIL SPENDING

### Per Pupil Expenditures



**These numbers tell us** that there is, on average, a 10% yearly spending increase per pupil for regular students. In 2002-2003, the county spent \$5,157 on each regular pupil, compared to \$7,454 in 2006-2007.

### How do we compare?

Sarasota County spends more per pupil than the state average. For regular students, we averaged \$6,381 per year from 2001-2006 compared to \$5,250 for the state. Sarasota County has averaged an 8% yearly increase per pupil. The state average is a 6% yearly increase.

### How is this measured?

Data is from the Florida Department of Education's Financial Database. Data is kept for regular, exceptional, at-risk, and vocational students.

## Why is this important?

The four measures that make up this indicator examine related aspects of the public education system in Sarasota County. A high level of stability helps to form the foundation for a successful student – if students are stable, they can focus on their schoolwork. This leads to a higher chance of becoming part of graduation rate instead of the dropout rate. From a system-wide perspective, per pupil spending is a predictor of an environment where students learn. If students have adequate teachers, materials and technology, they are more likely to develop skills for the future and value knowledge.

Educational stability is a necessary component for students to reach their potential. Research suggests that frequent school changes cause students to perform under grade level or repeat a grade. In addition to the effects on the learning cycle, there are also negative social effects. Moving frequently forces students to adjust to new classroom settings and peers while losing the social network from their previous school.

High school dropout rates have long been used as a predictor of future employment prospects. As more jobs require a college degree, students who drop out of high school are increasingly likely to be employable only at low-paying jobs. An estimated 85% of today's jobs and almost 90% of the fast growing high-wage jobs require some college education.

If Florida's high schools and colleges raise the graduation rate of Hispanic, black and Native American students to that of white students by 2020, the potential increase in personal income would add more than \$14.6 billion to the state economy. In Sarasota County, black students have the highest dropout percentage - if we could cut that percentage by half, it would enrich and improve the lives of the high school graduates and our community.

Per pupil expenditure is often used as a measure of the resources available to help children in the public school system learn. Most of the money is spent on salaries, which means that higher per pupil spending attracts qualified teachers to the district. It also means that there are more and higher quality materials, supplies and technology available in the classroom. In addition, Sarasota's high level of per pupil spending serves to reinforce our community-wide value of education.

## What can I do?

- Join a mentoring program – there are many great ones in Sarasota County. Sarasota County has a Mentoring Task Force in order to have a single point of entry for anyone who wants to become a mentor to a young person in our community. For more information and to become a mentor, call Friendship Volunteer Center at 953-5965.
- Get involved with Partnerships and Alliances Linking Schools (PALS), an association dedicated to creating a district wide coordinating program for school volunteers. PALS has many opportunities to volunteer, working directly and indirectly with students. Call (941) 927-9000 x 31500 or visit [www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/pals](http://www.sarasota.k12.fl.us/pals).
- Donate unwanted computers to a public schoolchild. A program called Home Computers for Sarasota County Schools (HCSCS) will connect your donation to a family who is unable to afford a computer for their student. HCSCS will load the computer with software to improve typing skills, provide research opportunities and view educational CDs. Call Bonita at (941) 927-0965 to donate.

## Linkages

### Natural Environment:

School allows youth to learn about the way the natural world works, both in the classroom and through hands on learning. Field trips to natural places provide exposure to our environment and lessons about Florida's climate and vegetation.

### Built Environment:

Due to state regulations, new public schools must be able to house large numbers of students. Because much of the land that will accommodate a large school is not near residential areas, students often attend schools that are far from their home or not in walkable areas.

### Economic Environment:

Students in high school who gain skills and attend college are likely to earn a larger income. If students prepare to succeed in well paying jobs and we provide those jobs locally, we will strengthen our local economy and reduce local 'brain drain'.

### Social Environment:

School provides an opportunity for students to befriend people of different cultures and backgrounds. For many children, school is the most diverse part of their daily life. Working with diverse people while young has multiple benefits later in life.

## What else would we like to know?

It would be useful to know the number of students who took more than four years to graduate high school. These students are not accounted for in the dropout rate or the graduation rate (see "Reservations and Caveats" for more information). This information would show that there are students who struggle but do not become dropouts, and instead are being helped and encouraged to graduate.

The data for per pupil expenditure are not divided into elementary, middle and high school, and instead are an average. It would be useful to know how much the per pupil expenditure is according to the grade level.

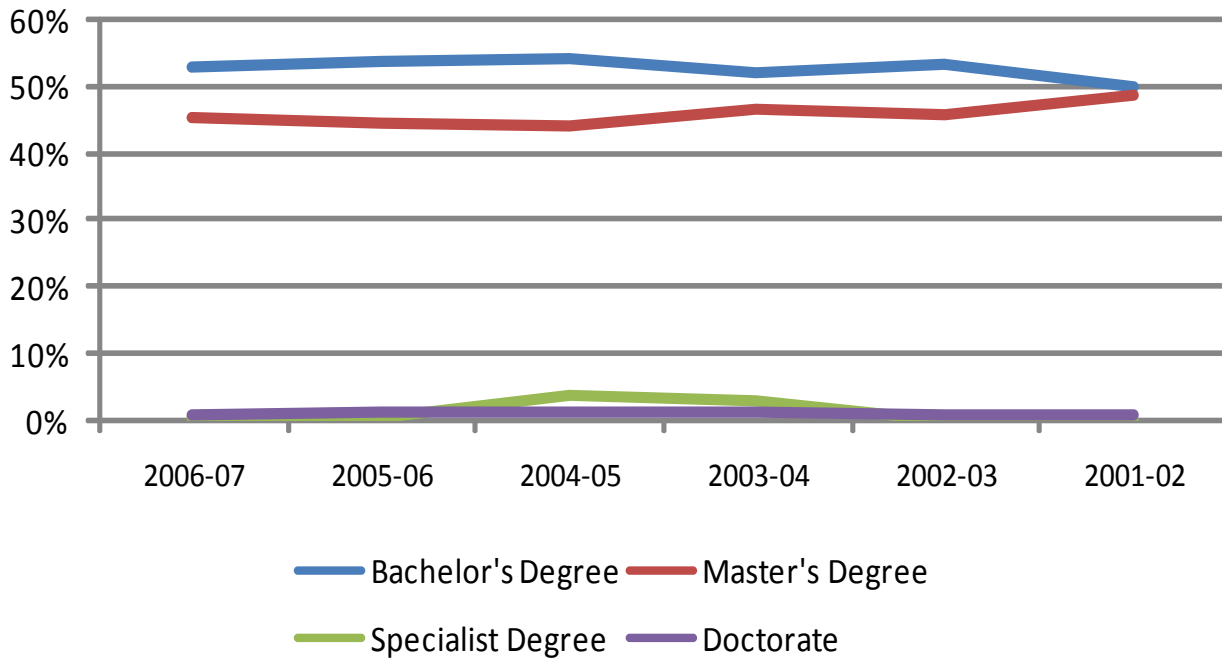
## Reservations and Caveats

Dropout rates and graduation rates do not add up to 100% because dropout rates measure a single year while graduation rates measure a four-year cohort. For example, the graduation rate in 2005-2006 was 76%, and measures those students who entered high school in the 2002-2003 school year. The dropout rate for this same period can be approximated from the sum of the rate for the years 2002-2003 through 2005-2006, and adds up to 10%. Adding the four-year graduation rate (76%) to the four-year dropout rate (10%) still does not capture all students for this four year period, adding up to only 86%. The remaining 14% are not captured for one of the following reasons:

- The student did complete high school, but in more than four years.
- The student withdrew from public high school but then enrolled in GED classes through the Adult and Community Education Center, eventually getting their diploma but not at a public high school.

**Data Sources:** Florida School Indicators Report (<http://data.fldoe.org/fsir>) **References:** [www.all4ed.org/files/Florida\\_wc.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/files/Florida_wc.pdf), [www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2002/05/23/school-spending.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2002/05/23/school-spending.htm), [www.archive.gao.gov/t2pbat4/150724.pdf](http://www.archive.gao.gov/t2pbat4/150724.pdf), [www.empirezone.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/05/24/the-highest-per-pupil-spending-in-the-us](http://www.empirezone.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/05/24/the-highest-per-pupil-spending-in-the-us)  
**Illustrations** by Mark Villarreal

## Type of Degree Held by Public School Teachers



## What is SCOPE ?

*"To connect and inspire citizens to create a better community."*

SCOPE is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on building community connections. Our goal is to engage a diverse group of people in conversations to look at what we want our future to be instead of

### Connected communities have:

- Lower rates of school dropout
- An increased ownership of the decision-making process
- Lower crime rates
- Fewer colds and heart attacks

problemsolving the past. In addition to publishing a community indicators report (the *Community Report Card* you are reading), SCOPE conducts studies on topics such as Affordable Housing (2002), Mental Health (2003), and Family Violence (2004). Our two current studies are *Aging: The Possibilities* and *Race and Cultural Relations*.

If you were forwarded this message & would like to receive the *Community Report Card* in your inbox, please email [kirwin@scopexcel.org](mailto:kirwin@scopexcel.org). If you want to get connected with SCOPE and our community, please visit [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org) or call (941) 365-8751

### Indicator Releases

<b>Introduction</b>	August
<b>Accessibility</b>	September
<b>Water Quality</b>	October
<b>Connectivity</b>	November
<b>Hurricane Preparation</b>	December
<b>Transportation</b>	January
<b>Land Use</b>	February
<b>Wealth &amp; Income</b>	March
<b>Jobs &amp; Industry</b>	April
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	May
<b>Education</b>	June
<b>Health</b>	July
<b>Civic Engagement</b>	August