



Introduction to Civic Learning and Engagement



Objectives



- Better understand key principles of civic learning and engagement projects.
- Discuss the benefits of active, ongoing and meaningful exposure to civics for young people.
- Learn how civic learning and engagement can help young people build 21st century, academic and citizenship skills.

Civic Engagement



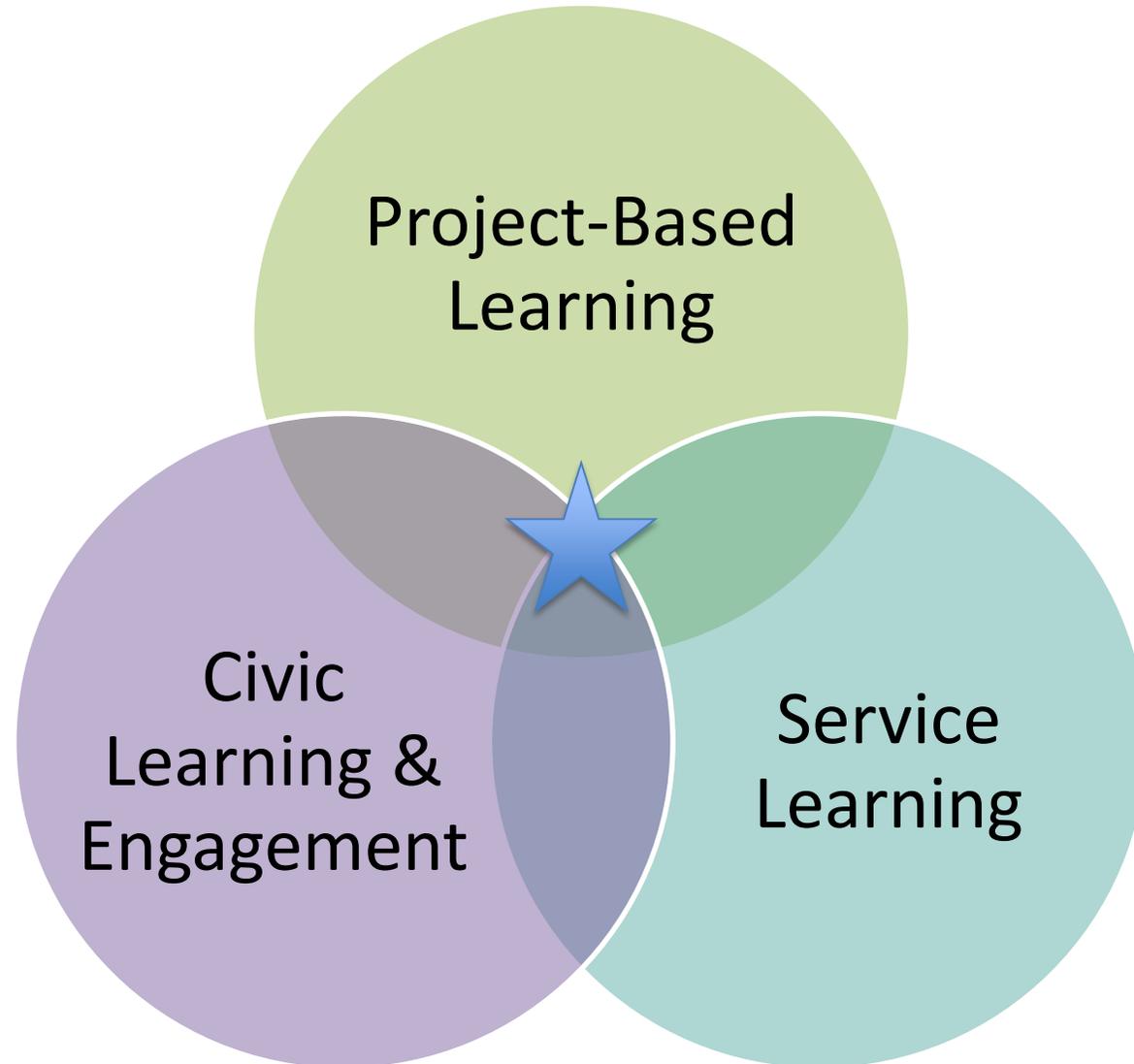
How are you or your students civically engaged?

- Voting in a recent election
- Invested in a faith community
- Serving on an advisory board
- Being a responsible and educated consumer
- Participating in a recycling program





Project-Based Learning, Civic Learning and Engagement, and Service Learning



Benefits of Civic Learning and Engagement



- Engage students in authentic, doable, sustainable tasks for social good.
- Tap into youth interests and skills.
- Provide opportunities to collaborate with community partners.
- Help students understand that they can make a difference in the world around them.
- Support and reinforce academic and citizenship skills.



Civic Learning and Engagement Projects



- A group of middle schoolers sees a problem with trash at local playgrounds. They interview members of the recreation department to determine the cause of the problem. During their investigation, they join forces with a local parent group and successfully petition the city council to purchase six solar-powered, compacting trash cans – one for each playground.
- Students concerned about climate change conduct research to find out how the town deals with its trash. They present their findings to a local chapter of Keep America Beautiful, which agrees to help them inform the town council about alternative energy options. As a result of the joint presentation at a meeting, the town council is now considering the purchase of a wind turbine.



Benefits of Active Participation



- Build understanding of the democratic process.
- Connect to the school community.
- Be aware of the influence of the individual and the power of collective problem solving.
- Understand that individuals and groups can address significant problems and issues.
- Recognize and respect multiple viewpoints and diverse perspectives.



Building 21st Century Skills

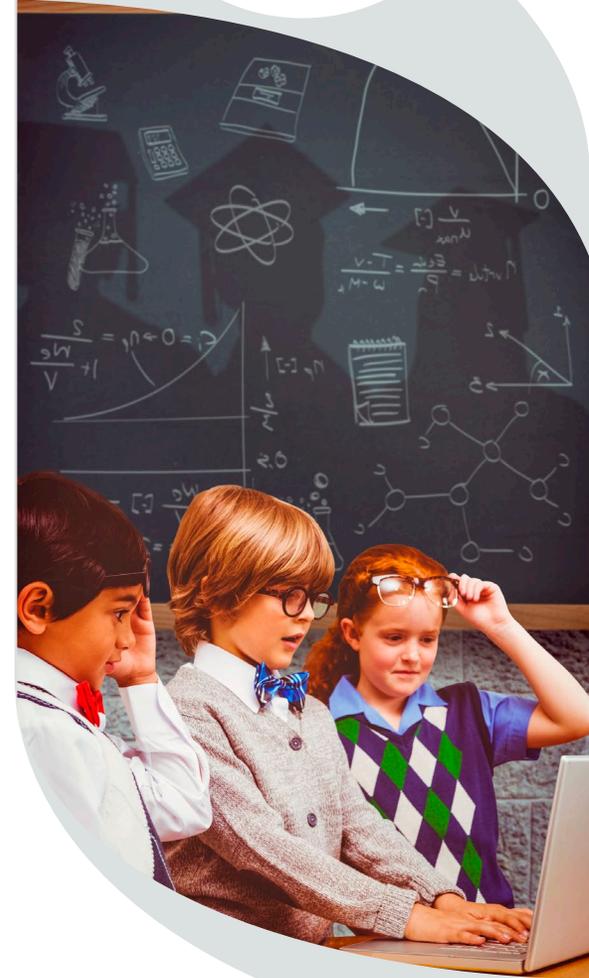
- Information Literacy
- Effective Communication
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking



Building Academic Skills



- Math
- English Language Arts
- Science
- Social Studies/Civics
- Other Subjects





Incorporating School-Day Civics Themes



Building School-Day Civics Into Out-of-School Time Projects

Checklist

- Meet with school-day instructional staff to learn about current or upcoming civics lessons.
- Obtain your state's social studies standards or frameworks and familiarize yourself with the document's civics requirements.
- Obtain civics texts or reading materials used during the school day.
- Participate in ongoing planning and collaboration sessions with school-day teachers.
- Plan civics projects and activities to complement school-day learning.
- Find teachers willing to review civics projects or activity plans.
- Provide teachers, principals and key administration with evidence of civics learning and achievement in afterschool.
- Other:

Use this checklist to gather information about school-day civics lessons. Then plan ways to complement (not replicate) the school-day learning by completing the chart below.

School-Day Lesson	Out-of-School Time Project
Topic: <i>Example: Environmental science lesson on water pollution.</i>	Project Driving Question: <i>Example: How can we identify what might be causing water pollution in the stream next to the school?</i>
Learning Standards Addressed: <i>Example: Identify human-made factors that affect water quality.</i>	Learning Standards Addressed: <i>Example: Walk the neighborhood and construct a map showing potential sources of pollution.</i>
Major classroom lesson or activity: <i>Example: Water-testing experiment to check for pollutants.</i>	Major project tasks or activities: <i>Example: Meet with the local River Keepers group or municipal water safety department to learn about possible actions the group may take to help reduce pollution in waterways; start a River Keepers club.</i>

The Democratic Process



- Form committees and clubs on different topics.
- Conduct debates and vote on important decisions that affect the program.
- Have students work through conflict with dialogue and deliberation.
- Seek opportunities to increase diversity and include multiple points of view.





Honoring Multiple Viewpoints



Incorporating Multiple Viewpoints Checklist

Use this checklist to help assess whether your program is supportive of multiple viewpoints and perspectives, and to help youth enrich their perspectives on critical issues while building communication skills.

Supportive Practice	Currently Doing	Will Consider Doing
Discussions and Debates (Speaking and Listening Skills)		
Establish a safe environment and set ground rules for respectful listening and discussions.		
Have students develop and sign a pledge regarding civil discourse and respectful conversations.		
Before a discussion, ask students to complete an anonymous survey to gather individual opinions and perspectives.		
As the facilitator, ask probing but nonjudgmental questions that explore the reasoning behind opinions or convictions.		
Use a combination of small- and large-group discussion formats.		
Allow for disagreement and grant equal time for those with opposing views.		
Assign students to different sides of a debate to ensure they consider opposing arguments.		
Have different students facilitate or moderate discussions over time.		
Other:		
Research and Investigation (Reading Skills)		
Have students research both sides of an issue and make a chart to compare positions.		
Have students read articles or media accounts of an issue and separate fact from opinion.		
Use articles or media accounts of an issue and ask students to identify the political orientation or possible bias of the author.		
Other:		

Next Steps

- What ideas do you have for civic learning and engagement projects?
- What staff and resources would be needed?

