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Beyond the Classroom Walls: Empowering Diverse Learners Through Civic Engagement

MARIOLA KROL

mkrol@sewanhaskaschools.org

mkrol@lions.molloy.edu

Inspired by a fortune cookie...

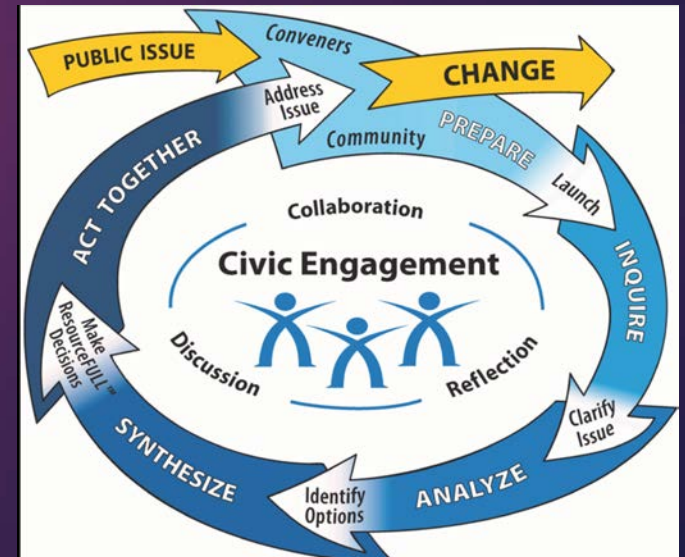


**“Service is the rent you pay for
having room on the Earth.”**

The Importance of Civic Engagement

- a fundamental component of democratic society
- the French philosopher Jean Jacque Rousseau said: "Lack of community involvement may result in the moral and social decline of the state"
- supports student achievement beyond the walls of the classroom
- leads to decreased substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, violence and school dropout rates (Voight & Torney-Purta, 2013)
- helps develop multicultural sensitivity, increased critical thinking skills, the ability to consider alternative viewpoints, an appreciation of diversity, active monitoring of current events, and a sense of agency.

In the era of focusing on test areas like math and English civic education is marginalized or not taught at all in schools (Shiller, 2013).



Rationale

- ▶ promoted by NYSED's Civic Readiness Initiative
- ▶ reflected in the Every Student Succeeds Act Plan, as noted by the inclusion of the Civic Readiness Index as a measure of a school's success
- ▶ mirrored in NYSED's Comprehensive ELL Education Plan, which asks districts to describe their purposeful plan of action to promote civic readiness through high quality programs for English learners.



Civic Engagement Projects for All Learners

- ▶ Diverse learners can successfully and effectively participate and learn from civic engagement projects (adaptations, scaffolding)
- ▶ ELL learners, learners with varied abilities



Strengths

- ✓ Suitable for all age groups
- ✓ Interactive and engaging
- ✓ Enables participants to express their creativity
- ✓ Can help develop a common vision
- ✓ Can be exhibited to generate further discussion

What does civic engagement mean to you?



Civic Engagement Survey

Civic Engagement Survey for Students Grades 5-12

Please circle your level of agreement to the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I want to make my community a better place	1	2	3	4	5
Participation in my community is important	1	2	3	4	5
Helping community members is important	1	2	3	4	5
Supporting people in my community is important	1	2	3	4	5
Volunteering in my community is important	1	2	3	4	5
Protesting in a non-violent way is important	1	2	3	4	5
Fundraising for a good cause is important	1	2	3	4	5
Keeping my community clean is important	1	2	3	4	5
Beautification of my community is important	1	2	3	4	5
Helping community members in need is important	1	2	3	4	5
Helping animals is important	1	2	3	4	5
Including others in my community is	1	2	3	4	5

Four Corners- Brainstorm and record your group's answers

1. What are examples of civic engagement?
2. What skills does a person need to be involved in community work?
3. What motivates a person to get involved in community work?
4. What kind of change would you like to see in your school or community?

1. Examples of civic engagement

Helping your neighbor, planting flowers, community cleanups, food and clothing collections, sporting events, school plays, fundraisers.

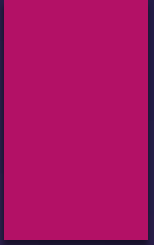


2. What skills does a person need to be involved in community work?

Compassion, dedication, selflessness, passion for helping others, good conscience.

3. What motivates people to work for their community?

Wanting to help other people, willingness to give of their time, helping to make a difference



4. What kind of change would you like to see in your schools or community?

More after school programs, athletic and educational, more people to get involved, improvements to make things look better, help people with drug problems or mental issues, people putting more effort to help others, cleaner parks and streets.

How to Plan for a Civic Engagement Project

- ▶ Topic
- ▶ Content (aligned with curriculum standards)
- ▶ Driving Question(s)
- ▶ Critical Thinking Research
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Technology Integration
- ▶ Sharing



Topic

- ▶ What are your students interested in?
 - ▶ What problem are you encountering in your school/community/country?
 - ▶ What is happening on Social media?
- ▶ Expose students to engaging topics that get them thinking and asking questions
 - ▶ Music video
 - ▶ Picture
 - ▶ Article
 - ▶ Book/Story
 - ▶ Field trip (virtual or real life)



Content

- ▶ Content– What standards connect well to the unit?
- ▶ What knowledge and skills do you want your students to gain through this experience?



Driving Question

- ▶ Students make observations and inquiries that drive research and study
- ▶ Students discuss how they could answer questions and fix an issue
- ▶ Teacher may need to help students along by posing a central question for them
 - ▶ English language learners
 - ▶ Students with varied abilities

Tips for Starters:

- ❖ Have all students work on the same central question
- ❖ Assign roles throughout the projects, based on student interests and strengths
- ❖ Monitor the group work

Questions to Promote Inquiry

What would happen if...?

What could we/you...?

What do you think...?

Why do you think...?

How would we/you...?

What do you predict will happen?

How would we/you find that out...?

Where do you think...?

How did you...?

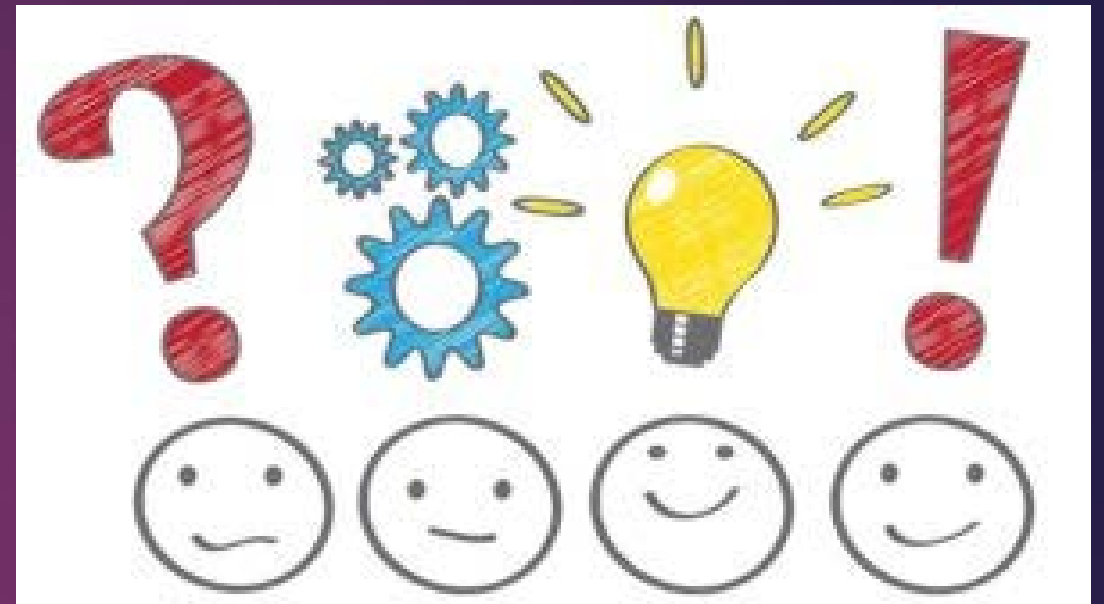
Why did you...?

When we/you..., what do you think...?

If we/you..., what do you think...?

How would that...?

What else could...?



Driving Question Plan

- ▶ Students: identify steps to investigate central question or problem.
 - ▶ opportunity to give ELLs practice writing steps and outlines
 - ▶ may be adjusted as needed as project progresses
- ▶ Teacher: Design a plan separate from the students to keep you focused on your learning objectives
 - ▶ standards to address in the project
 - ▶ how you will assess the students' understanding of those standards
 - ▶ materials and resources you will need

PROJECT PLANNER

1. Project Overview

Project Title		Public Product(s) (Individual and Team)	
Driving Question			
Grade Level/ Subject			
Time Frame			
Project Summary			

2. Learning Goals

Standards		Literacy Skills	
		Success Skills	
Key Vocabulary		Rubric(s)	

Sample
Planning
Format for
Teachers

Action Plan Template

Action step: What will be done?	Responsibilities: Who?	Timeline: When will it be done? day/month	Resources: What do we have? What do we need?	Potential issues: What are the concerns? Proactive steps?
Step 1: Planning				
Step 2:				
Step 3:				
Step 4:				
Step 5:				
Step 6:				
Step 7:				
Step 8:				
Step 9:				

Sample Planning Format for Students

Critical Thinking and Research

- ▶ Students: Conduct research to explore the project's essential question
 - ▶ conducting interviews
 - ▶ internet research
 - ▶ books
 - ▶ documentaries
 - ▶ News ELA - articles on all sorts of topics
 - ▶ adjustable by reading level
- ▶ Teacher: Guide and monitor students
 - ▶ Monitor adherence to learning objectives
 - ▶ If necessary, pull some students aside and conduct mini-lessons or do some other form of more explicit instruction
 - ▶ Home language support (teacher/peers)



Collaboration



Technology Integration

Sharing - Possible Products

- ▶ poster
- ▶ iMovie
- ▶ song
- ▶ video recorded on iPads (interviews)
- ▶ role play
- ▶ brochure
- ▶ drawing/collage



*Student choice
and creativity

Sharing - Possible Audiences

- ▶ Another class
- ▶ Parents
- ▶ Other teachers, administrators
- ▶ PTA
- ▶ The internet
- ▶ Community members
- ▶ Local businesses



Public Service Announcement (PSA)

- ▶ works in every grade level and every subject
- ▶ students have a choice on what they want to create their PSA on
- ▶ make the topics students can choose related to the content you teach one class period, or over a week's time



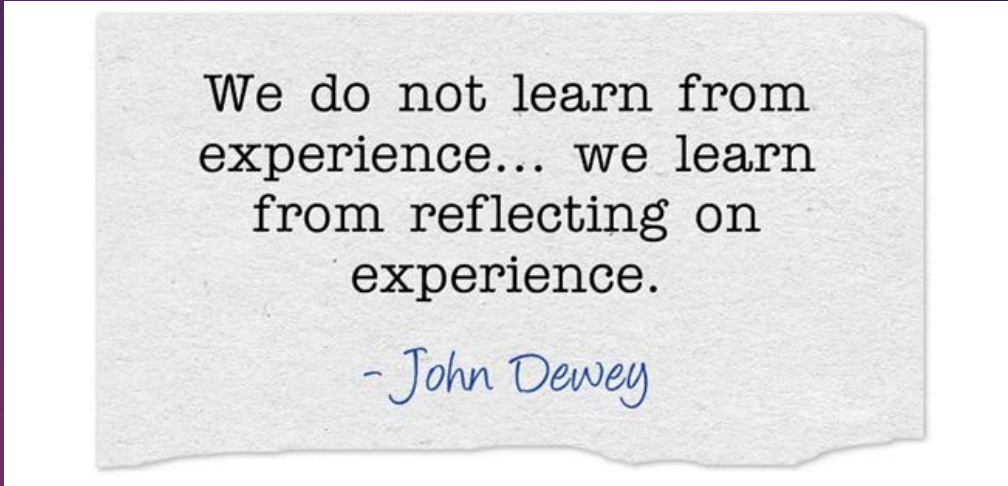
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Which goal do you feel personally about?

Brainstorm in your groups

Reflection



Give students the opportunity to reflect on

- ▶ what they've learned
- ▶ what they would do differently
- ▶ specific parts that were successful or unsuccessful
- ▶ further questions that were raised during their study

References

Shriller, J. T. (2013). Preparing for democracy: How community-based organizations build civic engagement among urban youth. *Urban Education, 48*(1), 68-91.

Voight, A. & Torney-Purta, J. (2013). A typology of youth civic engagement in middle schools. *Applied Developmental Science, 17*(4), 198-212.