Empowering Students Through Civic Engagement



Dr. Howard Hepburn
BCPS Superintendent

Understanding how government works, participating in community discussions and making informed decisions are important life skills that empower students to become active and involved citizens. At Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), civic engagement is woven into the educational experience to help students develop the knowledge and skills to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Civic engagement begins long before a student casts their first vote. It starts with asking questions, understanding how government works, exploring issues that affect communities and recognizing that every voice has the potential to contribute to positive change.

BCPS provides opportunities for students to develop these skills through civic education, hands-on learning experiences, student leadership and initiatives that encourage thoughtful discussion and active participation in community life.

BCPS Programs and Experiences
Through the BCPS programs and experiences outlined below, students can build an understanding of civic responsibility, learn to consider different perspectives, advocate for issues that matter to them and discover ways to contribute to their schools and communities.

- ***Kids Voting Mock Election –*** During election cycles, students in grades K–12 participate in a Districtwide mock election that introduce them to the electoral process. Through the experience, students have opportunities to research candidates and issues, consider different perspectives and practice making informed decisions.

- ***Constitution Day –*** This past September, representatives from the BCPS Office of the General Counsel visited schools to lead interactive activities focused on the U.S. Constitution. This is an opportunity for students to explore the foundations of American government, learn about constitutional rights and consider how the Constitution continues to shape civic life.

- ***Democracy in Action –*** Understanding government becomes more meaningful when students have opportunities to participate in the process. Through Democracy in Action, students research issues, develop ideas and write proposed bills. A state lawmaker reviews the proposals and selects one to pursue for potential implementation in the

Florida Legislature. The experience introduces students to the work involved in developing public policy.

- ***Rally to the Tally for New Floridians –*** In collaboration with the Close-Up Foundation, this annual field trip to the state Capitol provides students who are English Language Learners with opportunities to explore state and federal government, visit government institutions and engage with elected officials. Students develop a Youth Legislative Agenda, research issues affecting their communities and present policy recommendations to members of the Florida House and Senate.

- ***BCPS Capitol Days –*** During BCPS Capitol Days, high school students travel to Tallahassee to learn and explore the legislative process, meet with elected officials, observe committee discussions and present policy recommendations on issues affecting their schools and communities. Additionally, students tour the Florida Capitol and Supreme Court.

- ***Debate Broward –*** The Debate Broward Initiative, one of the largest and most comprehensive Districtwide debate programs in the nation, empowers students to use their voices with confidence, think critically and engage respectfully on issues that shape their world. Through structured debate, students learn to support their ideas with evidence, consider differing perspectives and engage respectfully on critical issues.

- ***Broward Youth Climate Summit –*** Every year, the Broward Youth Climate Summit brings together students in grades 5 – 12 to explore climate solutions, advocate for policy change and promote environmental sustainability. This unique platform offers students the opportunity to create their vision for climate solutions, learn about professional careers related to climate change, advocate for policy change and promote environmental sustainability.

Together, these initiatives reflect our District's commitment to preparing students not only for academic and career success, but also to be active and informed citizens in their communities. These civic engagement experiences build critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills while helping students understand how their voices and actions can make a difference.

Our students understand that civic engagement starts long before casting their first ballot and long after leaving the polling site. BCPS is committed to building the change makers and leaders of tomorrow.