

# STATE SEAL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ROADMAP – At A Glance

## VISION

All California students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, will have early and frequent access throughout their PK-12 education to high-quality civic learning opportunities that enable students to learn about civic and political issues, discuss and deliberate issues while considering multiple viewpoints, and to take informed action working with others to address to real world problems.

## STATE SEAL PURPOSE

- Recognize young people who are already participating in and knowledgeable about our democracy
- Encourage and create pathways for pupils in elementary and secondary schools to become civically engaged in democratic governmental institutions at the local, state, and national levels

## CIVIC LEARNING DEFINITION

In a constitutional democracy, productive civic engagement requires knowledge of the history, principles, and foundations of our American democracy, and the ability to participate in civic and democratic processes. People demonstrate civic engagement when they address public problems individually and collaboratively and when they maintain, strengthen, and improve communities and societies. ...

Civics is not limited to the study of politics and society; it also encompasses participation in classrooms and schools, neighborhoods, groups, and organizations. ...Civics enables students not only to study how others participate, but also to practice participating and taking informed action themselves.  
—California History–Social Science Framework



## STATE SEAL OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – STUDENT CRITERIA

*A student must ...*

1. Be on track to complete required high school coursework (or be engaged in academic work in a productive way);
2. Demonstrate a competent understanding of United States (U.S.) and California constitutions; functions and governance of local governments; functions of the three branches of government; roles of international governments, tribal government structures and organizations; the role of the citizen in a constitutional democracy, including rights and responsibilities; and democratic principles, concepts, and processes;
3. Participate in one or more informed civic engagement project(s) that address real-world problems and require students to consider varied problem statements and responses from their own perspective as well as the perspectives of others, take action, and reflect on efforts to make the proposed solutions meaningful for multiple segments of the community;
4. Present a written or otherwise demonstrated reflection of student civic engagement project activities; and
5. Exhibit character traits that reflect civic-mindedness and a commitment to impacting the school, community and/or society, supported by one or more written or digital recommendations from a peer, educator, mentor, local, state, or national official, or non-familial community member.

## ACROSS DISCIPLINE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Instructional shifts for all educators and learners to facilitate for student civic engagement – for students to learn about civic and political issues, discuss and deliberate those issues while considering multiple viewpoints, and work with others to take informed action to address real world problems



- **INQUIRY:** begin with a compelling question that is intellectually meaty, relevant and interesting to students, and will compel them to investigate a myriad of answers and solutions.
- **INVESTIGATION:** dig into the content of a complex issue, past and present, to search for answers by applying research and analytical skills to examine the social, political, historical, economic, environmental, ethical, and other trends and influences in decision-making.
- **CIVIL DIALOGUE:** engage in civil and respectful dialogues to reveal multiple perspectives around controversial issues to arrive at a conclusion; then, to communicate their conclusions in a variety of ways – speaking, writing, and using various forms of media.
- **INFORMED ACTION:** take effective, practical, and appropriate informed action on conclusions they have drawn by addressing issues and problems in the real world today.

## PROMISING PRACTICES (IN-SCHOOL, OUT-OF-SCHOOL, VIRTUALLY)

Courses on Civics, Government, Law, etc	Student Voice in Schools	Simulations of Democratic Processes	Media Literacy
Current, Controversial Issue Deliberations	Student-Led Voluntary Associations	Service Learning	Civic Action

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- CDE’s [Resources to Support Civic Engagement](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/hs/civicingprojects.asp) website (please note resource tabs for different purposes and audiences): <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/hs/civicingprojects.asp>
- National Roadmap for connecting History with Civic Learning (*coming out soon!*)
- [C3 Framework](#): College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards (National Council for the Social Studies)
- [California History/Social Science Framework](#)
- [CivXNow Coalition Resources](#)



# FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTEGRATING CIVIC LEARNING



As California school districts look to integrate and provide high-quality civic learning opportunities to enable all students to earn the State Seal of Civic Engagement, they should:

1

## Ensure equitable and universal access

- Provide access for ALL students and ALL schools (particularly those from historically marginalized communities)
- Integrate developmentally appropriate civic learning into all grade levels, starting in preschool, with appropriate on-ramps along the pK-12 spectrum
- Deepen connections within History/Social Sciences, instill in all other content areas, as well as foster multidisciplinary approaches
- Recognize and build connections between civic learning inside of school (inside and outside of the classroom), outside of school, and in online spaces

2

## Value and honor students and their community as positive assets

- Affirm student voice and student lived experiences
- Enable students and teachers/educators as empowered agents of positive change
- Recognize civic leaders and community partners as equal collaborators with teachers and students in learning about and participating in a representative democracy

3

## Promote student-centered learning to support the whole child to effect positive change

- Provide relevant learning opportunities to facilitate student understanding of themselves, their communities, and present day social and political issues
- Provide engaging and empowering experiential learning opportunities that foster student choice, voice, and agency as they take action to address real-world problems and create change
- Activate and elevate student cognition and practice of moral/ethical analysis and action (along with their academic, social, and emotional development) in pursuit of truth, equality, and justice for all

4

## Provide enabling conditions and structures of support

- Articulate a clear vision (in strategic plan/LCAP/Graduate Profile) that includes and values civic learning and action
- Direct to and support for the development and centralization of effective implementation and collaboration tools and promising practices, at each level of the education system (state, county, school, pre-school)
- Provide educator professional development to engender a deeper understanding of civic education and civic processes and policies, as well as opportunities for teacher collaboration
- Affirm, build on, and integrate existing local priorities and initiatives
- Develop and calibrate performance based assessments and monitor for student access to the State Seal and school implementation of civic learning promising practices as part of the state's continuous improvement process

# STUDENT TESTIMONIALS ON CIVIC LEARNING

1

**Ensure equitable and universal access**

“Civic engagement is especially important for us teens because we are the future of our community. It is important for us to start getting involved early, as it truly exposes the issues and builds trust within the community and the people.”

--Mt. Diablo Unified High School District Class of 2021

“This class has opened my eyes to all the issues that are going on in the US and around the world. The showcase showed me more issues to be aware about.”

Student of M. Herczog on the CA Democracy Initiative

2

**Value and honor students and their community as positive assets**

“I have participated in many civic engagement events pertaining towards youth. Doing so, allowed me to reach a larger audience of youth who are looking to speak out for themselves other others about the issues concerning them. I have gained insight on voicing my thoughts and being more outspoken about what I want to see in my community.”

--Oak Grove High School, East Side Union High School District, Class of 2021

“Civic engagement is important to me because I feel like the best way to learn about other people’s perspective is to build a relationship with them in order to hear the most genuine side of them possible. Being involved in our communities is a great way to do this and assuming we have built a relationship it will allow people to feel like they can trust us with their opinion and to hopefully do something about it.”

--Acalanes Union High School Class of 2024

3

**Promote student-centered civic learning to support the whole child to effect positive change**

“When I took action on something to make a positive change in someone’s life that made me feel valuable. That made me realize that I have the potential to be the voice for someone who’s scared to raise their voice on the topic that embarrasses them. That made me, me as of who I am right now and what I can do more in future.”

--Silver Creek High School, East Side Union High School District, Class of 2022

“Civic engagement keeps me grounded in real world issues in the midst of an education that can often seem otherwise distant from real life. I feel that by being involved in my community I give back to those who have given me the environment in which I learn and grow with tangible solutions to pressing community based issues.”

- Mt. Diablo Unified High School District

4

**Provide enabling conditions and structures of support**

“Being in this program was such an impactful experience and something that I will always take with me. I was able to connect with a fellow student and adults that influence the way school runs in our county. We were able to go over important topic and received well worded answers that give me hope that many of the issues we discussed will have solutions.”

--Evergreen High School, East Side Union High School District, Class of 2024

“Civic engagement is important to me, because it is about applying what I learn in the classroom to real sociological issues affecting our community. For instance, my friend and I were able to utilize skills such as statistics, public speaking, and organization when we created a free after-school program at a local elementary school to teach students money management and ethical entrepreneurship. Civic engagement also builds a sense of community and trust and fosters relationships that can last a lifetime.”

- Mt. Diablo Unified High School District Class of 2020

# CIVIC LEARNING ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PRIORITIES



## Student Achievement

The American public and business community are keenly interested in youth developing the competencies necessary to thrive in a changing global economy. Civic learning not only enhances content knowledge of economic and political processes, but supports college and career readiness through opportunities for youth to apply academic concepts in real-world settings, work collaboratively in teams, and engage with professional role models.

(Judith Torney-Purta and Britt S. Wilkenfeld. "Paths to 21st Century Competencies Through Civic Education Classrooms: An Analysis of Survey Results from Ninth-Graders." Washington, D.C.: Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and American Bar Association Division for Public Education, 2009.)

## School Climate

Civic learning builds a positive school climate, which in turn has a positive impact on student outcomes, ranging from academic achievement to personal character. Research shows that providing opportunities to engage in civic learning teaches the importance of community (both within the school and more broadly). Respectful dialogue about controversial issues is foundational to a positive school climate. The benefits of civic learning in one classroom can help shape the norms of others and the school more broadly.

## Student Engagement and Reducing the Dropout Rate

Civic learning provides compelling, motivating, and challenging experiences that can keep kids in school. Civic learning, beginning in elementary and middle school with a focus on civic responsibility, is directly tied to a student's propensity to drop out of high school.<sup>3</sup> More than 80% of students who drop out indicate that they would have been more likely to stay in school if they had more opportunities to participate in experiential learning.<sup>4</sup> In particular, taking courses that require community service and participating in student government have been found to predict high school graduation and college attendance and success.

(Alberto Dávila and Marie Mora. "CIRCLE Working Paper 52: Civic Engagement and High School Academic Progress: An Analysis Using NELS Data." 2007.)

## Common Core Standards Implementation

Civic learning naturally supports the college and career readiness skills and abilities called for by the California Common Core State Standards (CCSS), especially in English Language Arts. For example, CCSS prioritizes comprehension and use of complex texts. The Constitution and Bill of Rights are excellent content for such skill development. CCSS calls for the capacity to analyze a problem and to communicate purposefully both orally and in writing, which can be achieved through simulations of democratic processes such as classroom mock trials. Including History-Social Science teachers in CCSS professional development can facilitate integration of civic learning and common core.

## Access to a Broad Course of Study

By encouraging student engagement and creating opportunities for real-life experiences, civic learning also supports California's goals related to subject areas such as the visual and performing arts, and science and engineering. Civic learning is also key for meeting California's commitment to environmental literacy which was set in law in 2004, as part of [AB 1548](#) (Pavley). Civic learning supports students' and schools' implementation of California's Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&Cs)—big environment-based ideas that explore the interdependence of human social systems and natural systems. These concepts are incorporated into the state frameworks, and included in state-approved K–8 science and history–social science core instructional materials.

## LCAP Stakeholder Engagement

By law, students are among the stakeholders that school districts must consult as part of their development of their Local Control Accountability Plans. Civic learning can help assure that students are well prepared to contribute effectively in that role. Students bring a special and important perspective to discussions around school improvement and equity. Such participation is a learning opportunity for both students and educators, and is an example of civic engagement that is both easily accessible for students and immediately relevant.