



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

Mission Statement: Encourage all students to believe in the power of their own voices and actions. Equip all students with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage responsibly in our culturally diverse democracy.

Empower all students to make informed decisions to enhance our interconnected world.

RATIONALE:

It is our responsibility to provide students with a meaningful high school education that prepares them for competitive employment and civic participation. Civics education empowers students to make informed decisions that will create a better future. There is research and evidence that suggests that we are in a national civic crisis where most Americans are not civically engaged.

- In the 2014 elections, New York State ranked 47th in the nation in voter turnout (28.8 percent), with some estimates of participation by communities of color at about 10 percent. (Your Vote is your Voice, NYSUT.org)
- In New York City 12% of eligible voters voted in the mayoral primaries and 26% in the general election in 2017 (NYtimes.com)
- More than half of Americans (53 percent) incorrectly think it is accurate to say that immigrants who are here illegally do not have any rights under the U.S. Constitution (Annenberg 2017)
- More than a third of those surveyed (37 percent) can't name any of the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment (Annenberg 2017)
- Only a quarter of Americans (26 percent) can name all three branches of government (Annenberg 2017)
- At least \$534.7 million has been spent by foreign governments, political parties and other foreign interests to influence U.S. policy or public opinion (Opensecrets.org)
- The U.S. Senate is 80% male, 90% white and has a median income of 3.2 million. (Opensecrets.org)

GOALS:



1. Ensure students develop the knowledge and skills to meaningfully transition to postsecondary opportunities and to exercise civic responsibility (ESSA page 142).
2. Create guidance and resources that support the NYS Social Studies Framework K-12:
 - a. K-12 Social Studies Framework Practice #6 Civic Participation
 - i. Create resources that include “Respectfully disagree with other viewpoints and provide evidence for a counterargument” and “Work to influence those in positions of power to strive for extensions of freedom, social justice, and human rights”
 - b. K-12 Social Studies Framework Social Studies Practice #1 Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence.
 - i. Create resources that will help educators build critical thinking skills that include an appreciation of the power of reliable information and the importance of the free flow of information in our democracy. Increase media, news and social media skills.
 - c. K-12 Social Studies Framework Social Studies Conceptual Understanding 12.G4 Political and Civic Participation: There are numerous avenues for engagement in the political process, from exercising the power of the vote, to affiliating with political parties, to engaging in other forms of civic participation.
 - i. Explore voter registration drives, current service learning, experiential learning and capstone projects and build on these opportunities.
3. Eliminate the inequality of opportunity in Civics Education that creates a Civic Engagement Gap. Strive to enable equitable opportunities for civic engagement that will reduce the disparity that exists in civics education between affluent communities and low-income communities.



OBJECTIVES:

1. Strengthen existing civics initiatives within the ESSA plan:
 - a. Define Civic Readiness Index in the ESSA plan (ESSA plan page 6).
 - b. Write the criteria for the State Civic Seal of Engagement, similar to the seal of Biliteracy. (ESSA plan page 74)
 - c. Pursue alternate means to create an indicators of civic engagement. (ESSA plan page 72)
2. Provide specific field guidance for the current NYS Social Studies framework:
 - a. Create resources that address how to build critical thinking skills in students around the social studies practices of gathering, interpreting and using evidence and civic participation
 - b. Provide professional development for teaching civic virtues, practices and deliberation.
 - c. Strengthen and support service learning, civics experiential learning and capstone projects
3. Strategize how to address the Civic Engagement Gap. Discuss possible recommendations for regulation changes and work with existing community organizations that address equality, opportunity and equity.

OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORK:

This group will represent a statewide coalition of leaders in civic related professions, civic activism, educators and other interested stakeholders.

This group will meet four times during the school year in Albany, New York City and Rochester.

They will partner with the Content Advisory Panel (CAP) of Social Studies, primarily comprised of NY Social Studies educators and Democracy NOW, primarily comprised of practitioners in Civics. The CAP and Democracy NOW will work towards supporting the objectives of the Civic Readiness Task Force.



PROPOSED REPRESENTATIVES BASED ON BOARD OF REGENTS RECOMMENDATIONS:

Student Representative

Parent Representative

Michael Rebell, Center for Educational Equity

DeNora Getachew, Generation Citizen

Christopher Sperry, Project LookSharp

Member of the Board of Elections

Member of the State Legislature

Representative for the law enforcement community

Representatives of Grassroots civics organizations

Private and Charter school representatives

PROPOSED REPRESENTATIVES FROM CHRISTINE RADEZ:

Debra Lesser, Director Justice Resource Center, We the People, NYC Public Schools

David Scott K-12, Project PATCH, Law and Civics Educator Coordinator, Northport Schools

Lisa Kissinger, President of the NYS Social Studies Supervisors Association