WHAT IS A STUDENT-LED CIVICS PROJECT?
WHAT WOULD A SHOWCASE OF STUDENT-LED CIVICS PROJECTS LOOK LIKE?

Student-led Civics Project Description

Student-led Civics Projects became a formalized portion of the curriculum through enactment of S2631, An Act to promote and enhance civic engagement. The League of Women Voters of MA advocated for passage of this law through its partnership with the Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition. This law states that schools are to make available student-led civics projects in Grade 8 and in at least one additional opportunity in Grades 9-12. Most schools are choosing to make this experience available in a required course so that it is accessible to all students. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided guidance to teachers on conducting student-led civics projects in the document, Civics Project Guidebook, available on their website at https://www.doe.mass.edu/instruction/hss/civics-project-guidebook/index.html - /

Projects may be done individually or collaboratively with a group of students. The topic is selected by the students based on an issue that is important to them. Students use an inquiry approach to researching and taking action on a real-world problem in their school, local community or more expanded community. Students are guided to understand the root causes of the problems they are researching and develop an action plan for solutions that they can influence to address those root causes. All projects must be non-partisan.

The Civics Project Guidebook describes six stages of a civics project.

1. Examine Self and Civic Identity. Students explore issues and topics that matter to them, their families and their communities.
2. Identify an Issue. Select a focus issue.
3. Research and Investigate. Examine the context, policies, perspectives, and history of the issue, and learn about possible root causes.
4. Develop an Action Plan. Build a theory of action and action plan aimed at achieving systems impact.
5. Take action. Begin acting on the tactics they planned.
6. Reflect and Showcase. Students end their project with a final, summative reflection and work showcase. Such a showcase is a best practice of project-based learning that supports student pride and ownership.

What would a showcase of student-led civics projects look like?

A showcase may be done as a "science fair" model, or more simply, as a classroom presentation with visitors attending.

In the science fair model, students would have a table at which they could display their project. They might use a standing project board like the ones you see at Staples to display information about their project or they might use technology through a smart board presentation or a PowerPoint presentation. They would describe the issue they chose to focus on, their research findings, and their action plan. They would describe any actions they were able to start and reflect on their experience. What the community brings to the showcase event, is an audience that will listen to the student presentations, ask questions, give feedback and commend them for their work. Having elected and appointed community officials and members of civic organizations attend is desirable. This experience helps students to develop a sense of pride and ownership. We want them to understand that civic participation is a lifelong skill that will help them, their community,

and our democracy. Individual schools may have additional ideas to make this a celebratory learning event.

The classroom presentation model is a more low-key strategy. Teachers choosing this model, would have a few invited guests who would attend a presentation by either the whole class or small groups within the class. Students present the same information as in the science fair model. Because there is a smaller audience at one designated time, students have to present fewer times, and teachers do not have to do the organizational work of preparing a larger science fair event.