

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL CIVICS CELEBRATION PROJECT

Developed by the LWVMA Civic Education Committee

FOCUS ON CELEBRATING STUDENT-LED CIVICS PROJECTS

Student-led Civics Projects became a formalized portion of the curriculum through enactment in 2018 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, (MCLC). 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.

MISSION

The League believes in the importance of preparing youth for their role as participants in a democracy. Active civic engagement is essential to help democracy work. To this end the League wishes to celebrate the importance of the work that students are doing on student-led civics projects and amplify youth voices. We would like to bring about broad recognition for all students engaging in this work at the local level. At the regional/state level, we would like to create an opportunity for student interaction with each other and with legislators and experts to help refine their projects and offer special recognition for exemplary student-led civics projects. Our goal is to create excitement among students and teachers about these civic engagement projects and encourage students to see civic skills as life-long skills that will allow them to continue to find ways to improve our communities and our shared future.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The Program Design consists of a local level project for spring 2022 and a potential state level pilot project for late spring 2022 that local League members can participate in.

STEP 1: THE LOCAL LEVEL – May/June (Interested Schools will select option 1, option 2, or an alternative based on their readiness and this year, their Covid- 19 concerns.)

Option 1, Local Community Showcase: To celebrate the importance of the student-led civics projects completed by all students, we propose that local Leagues work collaboratively with school districts to design a community showcase for the student-led civics projects. The local League would **invite** schools to participate, and these events would only happen with school acceptance and collaboration. The purpose of the community showcase would be to appreciate the work that students have done and commend them for their exploration of community issues and ways to address them.

This community event would invite parents, local officials in elected or appointed positions, civic organizations, League members and other community influencers. The specific showcase implementation at each school district would be determined in collaboration with school staff. Students could be awarded certificates of civic engagement and local publicity highlighting student work would also be arranged. The showcase could be for Grade 8 and

for high school projects. If the Grade 8 students are not a part of the high school, it could be a separate event for their schools. This could be done in person or virtually.

Option 2, Local Cable TV Interviews: The school selects exemplary student projects, and those students are interviewed on a local cable access program or series of programs. This approach may be more appealing to Leagues and schools that don't feel they have the time for a large event, or whom feel that a large public event is still not advisable as we continue to deal with Covid-19.

Note: We have found in our discussions with schools thus far, some of the schools are ready for Option 1, but others only feel ready for Option 2. Schools should select their preferred option, or suggest an alternative, which is option 3.

Option 3, An Alternative Option Designed by the School and the Local League:

Schools may have an idea for a customized option that they prefer and Local Leagues are encouraged to tailor celebrations to the school's preferences.

League Role –

- LWVMA will prepare a support package of resource material to help local Leagues collaborate with their local schools on this project.
- On Wednesday, February 16th from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., LWVMA will hold an informational session on zoom to familiarize local Leagues with the student-led civics projects and what a local showcase event that does not evaluate student work might look like. [Click here](#) to register for the info session.
- Local Leagues will be asked to reach out to schools containing Grade 8 and Grades 9-12 that they work with, to invite them to participate
- The state League will distribute through local Leagues information about the MCLC Civics Learning Week that will be held from March 7 – 11
- All local Leagues will be asked to routinely distribute electronically, the MCLC Newsletter to the schools they work with. This will be distributed through the League Leaders Google Group.

STEP 2: POTENTIAL STATE PILOT SHOWCASE OF STUDENT WORK – JUNE

We are in discussion with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition about designing a pilot project for a virtual state showcase of student work. We will share information about this as plans come to fruition.