GENERATION CITIZEN

THROUGH AN ACTION CIVICS LENS:

Policy and Advocacy to Support Effective Civics Education Across the 50 States

NOTE FROM GENERATION CITIZEN'S POLICY AND ADVOCACY TEAM

Generation Citizen's (GC) founding mission is to ensure that every student in the United States receives an effective Action Civics education, which provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in our democracy as active citizens. Through our Action Civics programming, which is currently provided in seven states across the country, we have reached over 50,000 students since 2010. But to fully realize our mission and ensure that all young people receive an Action Civics education, we need to not only provide our program, and demonstrate its effectiveness, but change the systems and perceptions that have prevented our school system from effectively prioritizing the preparation of students to be active citizens.

This call to action has not, in decades, seemed as urgent as it does today at a time when the very future of our republic appears at risk. Since its launch in 2016, Generation Citizen's Policy and Advocacy Department has engaged in comprehensive policy and field building research, spoken with diverse policy and education experts, and critically evaluated civics education policy across the country. Through the process, we have developed an understanding of the best practices for civics education policy and the diverse levers and stakeholders necessary for influence. We have applied this expertise to our work with state-level legislators and administrators to shape and implement policies informed by these best practices and led coalition advocacy to ensure their passage and equitable and sustainable implementation.

This work has informed Generation Citizen's annual Policy and Advocacy Agenda which outlines our Action Civics policy principles and positions and serves as a tool and starting point for shaping state-based policy agendas, and as a yardstick for evaluating and determining our organization's stance on any given policy. The current demand for improved state civics education policy that has emerged over the past couple of years, requires that the field provide more resources, policy examples, and guidance for state policymakers, educators, and advocates alike.

This report is intended to be a resource for policymakers and civics education advocates across states to identify strategic areas which are best poised to provide a student-focused, experiential civics education: Action Civics. It is intended to catalyze discussion on the specific pedagogies, teacher support, funding, standards and frameworks, and assessment mechanisms which can prepare students as civic actors ready to participate in a sustainable, equitable 21st century democracy. We encourage state-level coalitions of policymakers, parents, students, educators, civics education organizations, and other stakeholders to consider, disseminate, and implement the insights posited in this report.

We hope you will join us in advocating for effective civics education that prepares students for lifelong civic participation,

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, civics education policies have begun to rapidly change at the state-level across the nation. State-level education policy sets the foundational approach for curricular standards, holistic development and support of teachers, and the assessment of classroom practices. To support and advance efforts intending to improve civics education, Through An Action Civics Lens is intended to be a field guide of opportunities for influencing civics education policies from an Action Civics perspective. In providing this field guide, we are sharing initial opportunities that we've identified for all fifty states to implement statewide administrative and legislative change in civics education policy.

This report is intentionally designed for practitioners, policymakers, and advocates within the field of civics education and civic engagement, as well as adjacent actors such as youth organizing groups, and educational institutions prioritizing social-emotional learning, deeper learning, and other complementary approaches.

ABOUT ACTION CIVICS AND ITS IMPACT

Action Civics is a project-based approach to civics education that develops the skills, knowledge, and motivation necessary for lifelong civic practice as young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities. Just like science classes are supplemented with labs, to be effective, civics classes must be supplemented with practical application. In the case of civics, the lab is students' actual communities. Though addressing political issues, the pedagogy and discipline of Action Civics are decidedly nonpartisan and can serve to address the diverse students and needs of communities across the country.

In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. When applied in a classroom setting, adults provide guidance and support throughout the process. Any Action Civics program must include the following four elements: a student-led project; a real-world, community-based issue; civic action toward lasting change; and reflection on impact and approach.

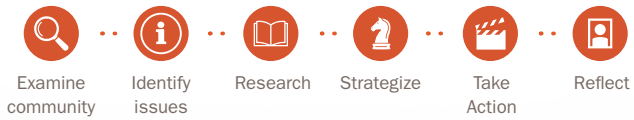


IMAGE *Action Civics students reflecting on their advocacy efforts*

The practice, first coined by Mikva Challenge, has been adopted and pioneered by other organizations and schools including Generation Citizen. There are currently nearly 500 schools around the country that have been identified as teaching Action Civics.

Action Civics can be a powerful motivating and learning experience, setting young people on a path towards lifelong civic and political engagement. Students who receive a combination of traditional and interactive civics score highest on civic assessments and demonstrate high levels of critical thinking and news comprehension[1]. Civic knowledge and civic attitudes are subsequently associated with young people's intention to vote in the future.[2]

Action Civics can also prove beneficial for student success and positive school culture. Eighty-one percent of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to drop out if there were more opportunities for experiential learning. Students who received a combination of traditional and experiential civics education demonstrate higher work ethic than those who did not.[3]

ACTION CIVICS AS A STEP TOWARDS CLOSING THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT GAP

Our nation is currently experiencing a civic engagement gap whereby individuals from low income communities and communities of color participate in government at lower rates than their high income and white counterpoints.[4]

This is mirrored by a civics education gap. Youth of color and those from low-income backgrounds are disproportionately excluded from effective civics education opportunities. These students are much less likely to have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities which involve public institutions like city agencies or local commissions, or engage in effective civics education classes at schools. Indeed, students in low-income schools, when compared with average socioeconomic status schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.[5] Furthermore, African-American, Hispanic, and rural students score lower on tests of civic knowledge and have less optimistic views of their civic potential than their more privileged counterparts.[6] Of note, students of color in lower-income communities often experience civic disjuncture between the ideals outlined in foundational documents like the Bill of Rights and their "daily experiences" of "racism, discrimination, and economic injustice" within particular social contexts, making some traditional civics education courses less resonant with their lived experiences.[7]

This emphasizes the need for positioning Action Civics as one effective means towards closing not only the civics education gap but also the civic engagement gap. Action Civics equips students from underserved communities with the tools to participate politically by rooting the learning experience in students' lived experiences and bringing awareness to the historical patterns of disenfranchisement. When young people from historically marginalized communities are prepared, positioned, and motivated to participate in the political process, they will demand that governments reflect and respond to the neir needs. This cycle will pave the path to a more representative, equitable, and therefore truly democratic political process.

[1] Gould, J. (Ed.). (2011). Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

[2] Cohen, A. K., & Chaffee, B. W. (2012). The relationship between adolescents' civic knowledge, civic attitude, and civic behavior and their self-reported future likelihood of voting. Education, Citizenship and Social Justice,8(1), 43-57

[3] Gould, J. (Ed.). (2011). Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

[4] Gaby, Sarah. (2016). The Civic Engagement Gap(s): Youth Participation and Inequality from 1976 to 2009. Youth & Society.

[5] Levinson, Meira. 2010. The Civic Empowerment Gap: Defning the Problem and Locating Solutions. In Handbook of Research on Civic Engagement, ed. Lonnie Sherrod, Judith Torney-Purta, and Constance A. Flanagan, 331-361. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons

[6] Gould, J. (Ed.). (2011). Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

[7] Rubin, Beth Cara. (2007). There's Still Not Justice: Youth Civic Identity Development Amid Distinct School and Community Contexts. Teachers College Record.

NAVIGATING EDUCATION POLICY

ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE CIVICS EDUCATION IN STATES: CRAFTING LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND PROVISIONS

While federal policy guides and subsidizes the nation's education system through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), it is largely at the discretion of a state to determine its own education priorities and curricula. As such, education systems across states vary both in terms of content and methods of teaching, as well as how they direct the priorities of their school districts. While some states mandate certain courses and curricula through law, others provide guiding frameworks while providing school districts with more flexibility to determine the details of how subjects are taught.

While the best approach for policy influence in states varies, there are two primary structural levers that can be pulled:

1. state laws
2. administrative code through state standards and frameworks.

Though the role of standards too vary by state, typically a standards document outlines the goals of education in that state, indicating what teachers are supposed to teach. Some states additionally have a curricular framework which details how the standards can or should be implemented.[8]

The needs and context of any given state are unique and as such, so should be their education policies. Nonetheless, there are universal principles that can be applied in the crafting of an effective civics state education policy supportive of Action Civics - whether legislative or administrative. Of note, any policy implemented to promote civics education must have an equity focus at its helm in an effort to close the civic engagement and civics education gaps: its instruction must resonate with the lived experiences of youth of all backgrounds and it must be provided to every student, not only high income and white students that historically have had more access to a high quality civics education.

Factors that matter: the universal principles of Action Civics policy

STATES SHOULD REQUIRE THE TEACHING OF CIVIC KNOWLEDGE AND PARTICIPATION

Courses that teach components of civic and government content in an action-oriented way allow students to retain the core civic knowledge they learn while also teaching them the skills necessary for participation.

Every state should require, by law, at least one civics education course for all middle and high school students and have standards and curricular frameworks for civics instruction. The content of civics courses should include the following topics, among others:

- The rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
- The branches of government and separation of powers;
- Opportunities for citizen participation in the various branches and levels of government;
- Community diversity and historical trends in voter registration and civic participation relative to disenfranchised voter populations;
- A working knowledge of intergovernmental affairs.

Student-led inquiry and project-based learning in civics courses teach and motivate civic participation, and should be incorporated into all civics classes. This includes students analyzing classroom-

[8] The National Council for Social Studies

identified challenges, and engaging in problem-solving strategies. Prior to middle school and high school graduations, students should be required to complete at least one Action Civics project in which they take civic action towards lasting change on a real-world issue in their community.

Although civics courses are often, and appropriately focused in the social studies, civic learning should also be integrated across academic disciplines. A well-rounded education prioritizes civic learning across every academic discipline—from math and science to language arts and physical education. States should incorporate applied, community-based learning to their content requirements and standards for all subjects.

STATES SHOULD ENSURE THAT FUNDING AND RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CIVICS EDUCATION

States should establish a Civic Project Fund to support educators in promoting and implementing effective civic learning and associated requirements. The Fund should be used to support teacher training and school implementation of effective Action Civics modules. This includes funding districts to support curriculum development and offer professional development, support for the implementation of student-led civics projects, the development of standardized assessment, and providing central capacity for standards, frameworks, and professional development. Funding allocation should be prioritized for school districts with high concentrations of underserved students. The Fund can be appropriated through state funding or through a private-public partnership, with unrestricted contributions from local organizations, foundations, and companies.

Funding needed to implement Action Civics statewide depends on local conditions including, but not limited to, size of student population, cost of living, and existing resources. Implementation needs and political realities differ by states resulting in different budgets. For example, the rollout of a recently implemented civics education requirement in Illinois' which emphasized teacher professional development, cost about $1 million annually for the first three years. Illinois has over 2 million public school students in over 1,000 districts. In Massachusetts, where there are 404 school districts and nearly 1 million public school students, it is estimated that it will cost $1.5 million annually to support infrastructure and professional development to ensure that every student and particularly those in underserved communities, receive an effective civics education including the opportunity to participate in a student-led civics project.

STATES SHOULD IMPLEMENT STRONG CIVICS ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES TIED TO STANDARDS

Assessment for civics education can be critical for holding districts and schools accountable for the effective implementation of states' civics standards and laws. Ideal Action Civics assessment should include project-based components. The best-in-class version of this form of assessment has yet to be established, which means there is a need and opportunity for the civics education field to define it. Currently, promising practices for civic project assessment can be seen in Tennessee where this is a graduation requirement.

It should be noted that not all assessment for civics education effectively measures, or incentivizes key civic knowledge, skills and dispositions. Momentum has built across numerous states for the Citizenship Test, identical to that taken by naturalized citizens, as a model for civics assessment. While this is a nod to the need for civics, it neither assesses the knowledge necessary for broad local, state, and federal civic participation, nor does it evaluate or encourage the development of civic participation skills and motivation. Florida recently implemented a statewide civics assessment which, while also a written test, requires more critical thinking that the Citizenship Test. This is a step in the right direction and gives civics education a greater platform in schools, yet like the Citizenship Test, does not, on its own, evaluate or encourage civic skills or motivation.

Accountability also can go beyond assessment. In addition to direct student assessment and graduation requirements, there are forms of accountability that can be implemented by states to ensure schools and districts are fulfilling their civic mission without putting the onus on the students themselves.

Assessment of student progress toward civics education outcomes should be an essential part of a state's strategy to implement ESSA's definition of a "well-rounded education". States can develop and implement effective assessment for student-led civics projects and incorporate results into student outcome metrics.

States can also establish a process in which school districts can formally report out their implementation of Action Civics. State departments of education should establish criteria upon which school district plans are evaluated, and support should be provided to school districts whose plans fall below the threshold of success.

Current state action to advance civics education

Though no policy currently uses the term "Action Civics" explicitly, a number of states have implemented policies, legislatively and through administrative code, that support and promote Action Civics by applying all, or some, of the key components of Action Civics policy outlined above. State-based examples can be useful models and templates for state policymakers and stakeholders as they craft similar policy adapted to their own local state contexts.

LEGISLATION

Below are examples of state legislation that support one or more of the principles of Action Civics policy. All other things being equal, a legislative approach to establishing Action Civics policy is the most sustainable, enduring way to ensure that all students in a state can access Action Civics. Legislation can require specific courses, assessment, and pedagogies and can call for the appropriation of funding. As such, legislation can holistically require and support the implementation of Action Civics directly, or create the conditions that support Action Civics practices. Legislative priorities around civics education policy are implemented through state education agencies, but can be more enduring than administrative regulations, particularly when supported with ongoing funding and resources. In the following examples, the highlighted words indicate which of the key components outlined in the previous section of this report the policy notably features.

Illinois

Funding
Civic Participation

A law enacted in Illinois in 2015 by Governor Bruce Rauner to amend the School Code, requires a one semester civics course for high school students intended to prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and motivation to be civic actors. The bill specifies best practices for civic learning, based on those in the report, "Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools"[9] and mirrors many of the components of Action Civics. The bill included a provision for the allowance of private funding to support its implementation to be directed towards teacher professional development.

The School Code was amended by changing Section 27-22 "Required high school courses" to include the following:[10]

> *Two years of social studies, of which at least one year must be history of the United States or a combination of history of the United States and American government and at least one semester must be civics, which shall help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives. Civics course content shall focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process. School districts may utilize private funding available for the purposes of offering civics education.*

Tennessee

Accountability
Civic Participation

Recognizing the need for assessment for civics education in order to give the subject a platform in the education system, and simultaneously noting the limitations of a standardized test, Tennessee enacted legislation in 2012 to require a project-based civics assessment. The bill language stipulates that local education agencies (LEAs), are responsible for providing students with project-based assessments in civics. The assessment requires that students participate in, and are evaluated on civics projects thereby necessitating the practice of Action Civics for school

[9] The "Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools" report, was published in 2003 and revised in 2011. It outlines the following agreed upon best practices for civic learning: civics courses, deliberations of current, controversial issues, service-learning, student-led voluntary associations, student voices in schools, and simulations of adult civic roles. These best practices were recently updated in the report, "The Republic is (Still) at Risk - and Civics is Part of the Solution", authored by a number of the same institutions. The following complementary best practices have been added: news media literacy education, Action Civics, Social and Emotional Learning, and school climate reform.

[10] IL General Assembly. Public Act 099-0485. An Act concerning education. (2015)

districts. Notably, we have found that because funding was not sufficiently allocated in association with the bill, the practice has not been universally implemented.

The bill's language is as follows:[11]

> *(1) Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, in conjunction with the social studies curriculum, all LEAs shall implement a project-based assessment in civics at least once in grades four through eight (4-8) and at least once in grades nine through twelve (9-12). The assessments shall be developed by the LEA and designed to measure the civics learning objectives contained in the social studies curriculum and to demonstrate understanding and relevance of public policy, the structure of federal, state and local governments and both the Tennessee and the United States constitutions.*
>
> *(2) The department of education may seek the assistance of appropriate outside entities, including the Tennessee Center for Civic Learning and Engagement, to assist it with the implementation of any necessary professional development on the use of project based assessments of civics learning.*
>
> *(3) For the purposes of this section, "project-based" means an approach that engages students in learning essential knowledge and skills through a student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks.*
>
> *(4) LEAs shall submit verification of implementation of this section to the department of education.*

Massachusetts

Civic Knowledge
Civic Participation
Funding
Teacher Training
Equity

In Massachusetts, a comprehensive civics education bill was signed into law in fall 2018 with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. The law requires that all schools teach American history and civics and that all schools teaching 8th grade and high school students provide students with no less than one student-led civics project, synonymous to Action Civics.

The bill also creates a Civics Project Trust Fund to be appropriated by private and public funds, and support teacher professional development, assessment creation and the implementation of civics standards. This law is the most comprehensive civics education law in the nation that most directly promotes the practice of Action Civics.

The bill language describing the student-led civics projects and Civics Project Trust Fund is as follows:[12]

> *(a) There shall be established and set up on the books of the commonwealth a separate fund to be known as the Civics Project Trust Fund. The fund shall be administered by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The fund shall be credited with: (i) revenue from appropriations or other money authorized by the general court and specifically designated to be credited to the fund; (ii) interest earned on such revenues; and (iii) funds from public and private sources such as gifts, grants and donations to further civics and history education and professional development. Amounts credited to the fund shall not be subject to further appropriation and any money remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the General Fund. (b) Amounts credited to the fund may focus on underserved communities across the commonwealth, including those school districts with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged students, and may be expended, without further appropriation, by the commissioner for the following purposes: (i) to assist with the implementation of section 2 of chapter 71, including professional development training; (ii) for the development of the history and social science curriculum framework, including civics education; (iii) for the collaboration with institutions of higher education and other stakeholder organizations; and (iv) to establish a competitive evaluation of a student-led civics project, available to all eighth grade students.*
>
> *(c) Each public school serving students in the eighth grade and each public high school shall provide not less than 1 student-led, non-partisan civics project for each student; provided, however,*

[11] TN General Assembly. 49-6-1028. Public school courses and content to educate children in the United States and Tennessee governments. (2014)

[12] MA Senate. Bill No. 2631. An Act to promote and enhance civic engagement. (2018)

that each such project shall be consistent with the history and social science curriculum frameworks adopted by the board pursuant to section 1E of chapter 69 and with structured learning time requirements as required under regulations promulgated by the board of elementary and secondary education. Civics projects may be individual, small group or class wide, and designed to promote a student's ability to: (i) analyze complex issues; (ii) consider differing points of view; (iii) reason, make logical arguments and support claims using valid evidence; (iv) engage in civil discourse with those who hold opposing positions; and (v) demonstrate an understanding of the connections between federal, state and local policies, including issues that may impact the student's school or community. Any student choosing not to participate in a particular group or class-wide project shall be offered the opportunity to develop an individual civics project, with approval by the principal.

Washington

Civic Participation

Teacher Training

Equity

Washington state enacted a law in 2018 that requires all LEAs to provide a half-credit of a stand-alone civics course for high-school students prior to graduation and teachers to be trained to effectively provide such a course. The course will be based on best practices for civic learning outlined in the aforementioned "Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools" report. The Washington Office of the Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for ensuring that districts implement this legislative priority. Moreover, OSPI is enjoined to select two LEAs which are "diverse in size and in geographic and demographic makeup" to serve as demonstration sites.

A subset of the language of the law is below, including a description of the demonstration sites. The remainder of the bill outlines provisions of the standalone course content and teacher training:[13]

The legislature, therefore, intends to: Require school districts to provide a mandatory stand-alone civics course for all high school students; and support the development of an in-depth and interactive teacher professional development program to improve the ability of teachers throughout the state to provide students with an effective civics education from kindergarten through twelfth grade. This expanded civics education program seeks to ensure that students have basic knowledge about national, state, tribal, and local governments, and that they develop the skills and dispositions needed to become informed and engaged citizens.

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall select two school districts that are diverse in size and in geographic and demographic makeup to serve as demonstration sites for enhanced civics education. These demonstration sites will:

(1) Implement and assess an in-depth civics education program that includes the six proven instructional practices for enhancing civic education in kindergarten through twelfth grade classrooms;

(2) Collaborate with programs and agencies in the local community in order to expand after-school and summer civics education opportunities;

(3) Monitor and report the level of penetration of civics education in school and out-of-school programs;

(4) Ensure that underserved students including rural, low-income, immigrant, and refugee students are prioritized in the implementation of programs;

(5) Develop evaluation standards and a procedure for endorsing civics education curriculum that can be recommended for use in other school districts and out-of-school programs; and

(6) Provide an annual report on the demonstration sites by December 1st each year to the governor and the committees of the legislature with oversight over K-12 education.

[13] WA Legislature. RCW 28A.230.094. An act relating to the expansion of civics education in public schools. (2018)

STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

Strengthening social studies standards and frameworks with an emphasis on civic knowledge and skills can direct educators towards teaching Action Civics. Standards and frameworks that support Action Civics are those that mirror its key tenets: community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. All 50 states have state standards that include some form of civics education. While some states have a supplemental framework document, in others, the frameworks are incorporated into standards documents, and in some cases there is no universal framework. In a number states, there are strong standards and framework documents that include tenets of Action Civics, but the practice is not explicitly required. In these cases, educators can teach Action Civics as a means of operationalizing standards and frameworks, creating course content that meet the standards in an action-oriented, project-based way. States that do not have a framework document should consider creating one as frameworks can be particularly valuable for supporting Action Civics given their focus on pedagogical practice as a complement to classroom content.

The following are examples of states' standards and frameworks that lend themselves towards the instruction of Action Civics.

Virginia

In Virginia, civics education is integrated across its standards document, "K-12 History and Social Science Standards of Learning," with a special attention given to skills, described as the tools used to improve understanding of the curriculum and key for preparing students to become better-informed citizens. The standards for the "Virginia and United States Government" course, in particular, embrace the practice and skills of Action Civics.

The standards are as follows:[14]

> *The student will apply social science skills to understand the process by which public policy is made by*
>
> *a) defining public policy and determining how to differentiate public and private action;*
>
> *b) examining different perspectives on the role of government;*
>
> *c) describing how the national government influences the public agenda and shapes public policy by examining examples such as the Equal Rights Amendment, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 9524 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965;*
>
> *d) describing how the state and local governments influence the public agenda and shape public policy;*
>
> *e) investigating and evaluating the process by which policy is implemented by the bureaucracy at each level;*
>
> *f) analyzing how the incentives of individuals, interest groups, and the media influence public policy; and*
>
> *g) devising a course of action to address local and/or state issues.*

California

California adopted a History and Social Science Framework for k-12 public schools which complements content standards, providing educators with guides "as they design, implement, and maintain a coherent course of study to teach content, develop inquiry-based critical thinking skills, improve reading comprehension and expository writing ability, and promote an engaged and knowledgeable citizenry." The Framework includes guidelines for instructional practice as they apply to 21st century learning. The Framework's instructional guides for civics mirror the key steps of Action Civics.

The following is from the document for grades 9-12[15]. The guide for instructional practice for grades 6-8 are similar, with less rigor:

> *Students deepen their appreciation for civic virtues, democratic principles, and deliberative processes when working with others. In addition, these civics-related activities can be woven into a variety of classroom content areas:*
>
> *1. Students evaluate rules, laws, and public policy in terms of effectiveness, fairness, costs, and consequences and propose modifications or new rules to address deficiencies.*

[14] Virginia Board of Education: "Standards of Learning Documents for History and Social Science: Virginina and US Government." (2008) http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/next_version/stds_va_usgov.pdf

[15] California Department of Education: "2016 History-Social Science Framework: Instructional Practice for Grades 9-12" (2016) https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfwchapter13.pdf

2. Students use deliberative discussion, including consideration of multiple points of view, in making decisions or judgments on controversial political and social issues.

3. Students construct and evaluate arguments and counterarguments and positions on issues using appropriate discipline-specific claims and evidence from multiple sources.

4. Students analyze a specific school or community school problem or issue using appropriate disciplinary lenses from civics, economics, geography, and history; propose and evaluate strategies and options to address it; and take and evaluate individual or collaborative actions and/or make presentations on the issue to a range of venues outside the classroom.

The C3 Framework

The College, Career, and Citizenship (C3) Framework, developed by the National Council for the Social Studies is a tool intended to support states in upgrading their state social studies standards. The aim of the Framework is to better prepare students for engaged citizenship and proposes that the civic learning arc include the following four dimensions, which support the Action Civics process:

1. Developing questions and planning inquiries
2. Applying disciplinary concepts and tools
3. Evaluating sources and using evidence
4. Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

To date over 20 states have used the C3 Framework as they have revised their standards and frameworks[16].

Connecticut's combined State Standards and Frameworks document, robustly models the C3 Framework. For each grade level, the document illustrates how each of the civic learning arc dimensions can be practiced in the classroom. The following are samples of inquiry components for each of the four dimensions for 8th grade United States History[17]:

Dimension 1: Developing questions and planning inquiry

- *Explain how a question represent key ideas in the field*
- *Explain points of agreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question*

Dimension 2: Applying disciplinary concepts and tools

- *Primary discipline: History*
- *Supporting disciplines: Civics, Economics, Geography*

Dimension 3: Evaluating sources and using evidence

- *Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources to support claims, noting evidentiary limitations*
- *Develop claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both*

Dimension 4: Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

- *Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem*
- *Assess their individual and collective capacities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levels of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.*
- *Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts*

Crafting the right recipe for civics education policy

Introducing and improving state policies that support Action Civics is imperative for ensuring that every student in a state can access a high quality civics education. However, checking the box on civics education standards and frameworks, or legislative policy alone, can be insufficient for ensuring that every student in a state will receive an effective civics education. In fact, creating both legislation and standards to support Action Civics that complement one another is mutually reinforcing and can lead to some of the strongest outcomes. The more funding, professional development,

[16] Levine, P. and Kawashima-Ginsberg, K. (2017) The Republic is (Still) at Risk – and Civics is Part of the Solution. Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University.

[17] Connecticut State Department of Education: "Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Framework" (2014) http://www.ctsocialstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ctsocialstudiesframeworks2015.pdf

civic infrastructure, and accountability that is created and provided for the implementation of a civics education policy, the more confident we can be in its ultimate success.

BEYOND LEGISLATED CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS AND STATE STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING CIVICS

In some states, legislative and administrative policy change to require Action Civics may not be an immediately realizable goal due to political climates, funding realities, or timing of policy cycles. While policy change should ultimately be the end goal, in these cases, creating and taking advantage of other substantive opportunities to improve and implement effective civics education can move the needle towards Action Civics for every student. Civics seals and civics education pilots are examples of such approaches. In a number of states, the establishment of a civics education commission or task force, legislated by the state, have provided critical resources and oversight for the implementation of civics education and have set the groundwork for effective civics education policy. Existing policies that may not be uniquely intended to support civics education can also be leveraged. For instance, many states have service-learning requirements which combine classroom instruction and community service. ESSA, the current federal education policy, also presents opportunities to implement and fund effective civics education.

INCENTIVIZING CIVICS EDUCATION THROUGH SEALS OF RECOGNITION AND PILOT PROGRAMS

Publicly recognizing high school students for high levels of civic competency, knowledge, and involvement upon graduation can incentivize students to engage civically and in doing so, urges schools to support students with civic learning opportunities. Similar public designation programs for schools and districts can be used to recognize high quality programs and student outcomes related to civics. A number of states have enacted laws requiring such recognition to highlight students and/or schools that demonstrate high levels of civic achievement.

Arizona currently has laws for both school and student recognition in civics. Arizona's School Recognition Program, initiated in 2012, celebrates schools which have demonstrated an exemplary adherence to the six proven practices of effective civics education[18]. Arizona's Governor also signed a bill into a law in 2018 that requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a State Seal of Civics Literacy Program which will recognize students from public and charter schools who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in civics[19]. California has a similar model, which will go into effect starting in 2021[20]. While such programs can be positive motivators for schools to effectively teach civics education and for parents and students to seek it out, they risk widening the civic engagement gap, rather than narrowing it, by having a disproportionate influence on schools that have the resources to improve their civics education and continuing to leave those without resources and with other priorities behind. To ensure equitable implementation of state seals and designation programs, they must have inclusive criteria that prioritize student-led civics projects and out-of-school civic participation, and be implemented with targeted funding from the state that supports high-need districts.

Recognizing an additional need to bolster civics in Arizona, the state has also enacted legislation to establish a civics education pilot. The pilot will develop a more comprehensive civics assessment[21] than the one based on the Citizenship Test which is currently used across the state, and will launch diverse civics programs in a subset of school districts to see how they affect outcomes on the revised assessment. Funding has been allocated for the development of the assessment and implementation of pilot curricula. The learnings from the pilot will likely influence future statewide decision-making and policy when it comes to civics education.

LEVERAGING ESSA FOR CIVICS

ESSA mandates that every student receive a well-rounded education and creates an opportunity to implement accountability metrics for civics. Indeed, ESSA provides multiple pathways for incorporating civics education - and Action Civics in particular - into statewide and district-based education policy.

[18] Arizona Department of Education: "Excellence in Civic Engagement School Recognition Program." https://www.azed.gov/civicengagement/recognition/

[19] AZ Legislature. HB 2561. An Act relating to establishing a State Seal of Civics Literacy. (2018)

[20] CA Legislature. AB-24. An Action related to Instructional programs: State Seal of Civic Engagement. (2017)

[21] AZ Legislature. SB 1444. An Act relating to American Civics Education. (2018)

According to the Education Commission on the States, civics education advances ESSA goals by "supporting improved academic performance, college and career readiness skills, and increasing a broad range of school quality and student success indicators"[22]. Below are examples of how select states have leveraged ESSA to improve and support civics education.

New York Civic Readiness Index

New York state exemplifies the use of ESSA as a lever for civics education, as demonstrated by the inclusion of a civic readiness index alongside college and career readiness within their accountability system. While the index is currently being developed, New York State's Board of Regents convened a public retreat to specify what civic readiness might mean at a localized level. Their agreed upon civic readiness index is intended to "measure schools' success in preparing students to become well-informed participants in a democratic society." Further, their deliberations about which school-level programs they intend to encourage in the areas of "curriculum, certification, and assessment" include those that support and encourage Action Civics such as capstone projects and active citizenship portfolios[23]. The Regents also emphasized the importance of focusing on civic readiness as a means for preparing students for critical civic and community activities such as "voter registration, voting, jury duty, and community service"[24].

Oregon Making Civics a Funding Priority

Oregon's approved ESSA plan includes preparing high school graduates for career, college, and civic life as one of Oregon's Department of Education's four strategic goals. This goal is advanced by prioritizing the strengthening of social studies education, including American history, government, and civics courses, as a criteria for the state education agency's disbursement of Student Support Academic Enrichment grants (under Title IV of ESSA) to local districts in support of a well-rounded education. Oregon's explicit highlighting of civics courses as a key component of not only a well-rounded education, but as a necessary funding priority, is a strategic way to incentivize and support the provision of high quality civics education.

LEVERAGING STANDING SERVICE-LEARNING REQUIREMENTS FOR ACTION CIVICS

Service-learning is a pedagogical practice whereby students participate in community service activities related to the subjects that they learn in class. This practice can strengthen both civic learning and engagement. These outcomes are particularly strong when the practice includes a discussion of the underlying causes of the social problems being addressed[25]. Not all service-learning is, or has the benefits of, Action Civics. However, when the community service component of service-learning addresses the underlying cause of a community issue, it can closely resemble Action Civics. As such, service-learning requirements can often be fulfilled by student-led civics projects which incorporate, and expand, the important, but more minimalist expectations typically set forth for students in service-learning education policy. A notable example of this is included, below.

Missouri Suggesting Service-Learning

Missouri's Board of Education encourages, but does not require, service-learning programs and projects in school districts. However, the service-learning provisions are described as a student-led, research-based approach to learning that engages students in addressing and solving community issues. It is intended to further civic engagement. Given Missouri's description of service-learning, Action Civics would be an ideal way to fulfil the practice both in terms of the project and program criteria, and the intended outcomes.

[22] Oregon's Consolidated State Plan Under the Every Student Succeeds Act. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/rules-and-policies/ESSA/Documents/APPROVED%20OR_ConsolidatedStateplan8-30-17.pdf.

[23] New York State School Boards Association. "Regents focus on equity, civic readiness". https://www.nyssba.org/news/2018/07/20/on-board-online-july-23-2018/regents-focus-on-equity-civic-readiness/

[24] Ibid.

[25] Kawashima-Ginsberg K. and Levine, P. The Republic is (Still) at Risk - and Civics is part of the Solution. (Medford, MA: Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University, 2017)

Missouri's State Board of Education describes their service-learning policy, in part, as follows:

> *"The state board of education shall encourage the adoption of service-learning programs and projects among school districts. As used in this section, the term "service-learning programs and projects" means a student-centered, research-based method of teaching and learning which engages students of all ages in solving problems and addressing issues in their school or greater community as part of the academic curriculum. As a result, service-learning fosters academic achievement, civic engagement, and character development."*[26]

LEVERAGING CIVIC COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES TO ADVOCATE FOR AND IMPLEMENT ACTION CIVICS

Statewide civics commissions and task forces represent a critical lever of influence for civics education policy generally, and Action Civics in particular. Typically, commissions or task forces are established by the legislature and have appointed individuals and representative groups as members. Where they exist, commissions and task forces are generally charged with making policy and implementation recommendations for civics education and / or supporting and overseeing the implementation of existing civics education policies.

COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVICS EDUCATION OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Commissions and task forces that are charged with overseeing and supporting civics education implementation in a state, vary in the scope of authority, level of funding, and capacity to implement a civics education agenda. They typically have a relative degree of operational independence from both the state legislature or state education agencies but still depend on the legislature for funding, and in some cases, report to the legislature or the public at large. What is distinctive about civics commissions and task forces with robust capacity, however, is that they often have dedicated staff (whether full-time, stipended, or volunteer), oversight authority, and budgetary resources to allocate. Following is an example of a commission that supports the implementation of civics education across school districts.

Utah Commission on Character and Civics

Utah's Commission on Character and Civics operates with a significant measure of capacity. The commission secures relative, but not complete, autonomy from the legislature and state education agencies by including a judicial and community representative in its formal leadership. In terms of its statutory authority, Utah's Commision on Character and Civics' purpose is defined as follows:

> - *Providing leadership for the state's commitment to civic and character education in the public schools, institutions of higher education, and the larger community;*
> - *Making recommendations to school boards and administrators; and*
> - *Promoting coalitions and collaborative efforts that foster informed and civil public discourse and responsible citizenship.*[27]

The commission further describes itself as carrying out the above-mentioned tasks by "funding and implementing commission-developed initiatives, or by partnering in selected programs which meet commission objectives and which benefit students or citizens across the state." It also has the authority to issue micro-grants (generally $5,000 or less) to teachers, schools, community organizations, and other groups which align with the commission's ideals.

Operationally, the Commission supports civics education, including, though not exclusively, Action Civics through its promotion of statewide coalitions, disbursement of funds, non-binding, but influential recommendations to school boards and administrators, and initiatives which align with its publicly stated purpose. As one example of this, the Commission provided resources for a statewide annual conference on civics education for K-12 educators, a portion of which highlighted the importance of Action Civics through panel discussions and digital resources provided to conference attendees.

[26] Missouri State Board of Education: Rev. Stat. § 170.037.1 https://law.justia.com/codes/missouri/2012/titlexi/chapter170/section170037

[27] Utah Commission on Civic & Character Education. "About Us, UT Leg. (67-1a-10)" http://civics.utah.gov/aboutus/index.html

COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES TO INFLUENCE POLICY FOR ACTION CIVICS

Commissions and task forces can be critical for initiating legislative processes towards civics education legislation and standards revisions, and making guiding recommendations regarding what said policies should look like. These bodies often conduct research on best practices for civics education and the specific needs of schools and students in the state, and assess local policy contexts to provide guidance to policymakers as they introduce or improve civics education related policies. Depending on the founding charge of a commission or task force, they have been seen to put civics education on the state education stage and pave a path towards a more robust civics education policy change. They can drive statewide civics education agendas and priorities and present opportunities to advocate for Action Civics learning and policy. Following are examples of commissions and task forces that have existed to make policy recommendations regarding civics education.

Illinois Task Force on Civic Education

The Illinois legislature established a task force on civics education to identify the best practices for civics education policy and make recommendations to the General Assembly on how to increase civic literacy and improve students' readiness for civic life. It was established at the recommendation of, and supported by, a non-legislated coalition, the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. The Task Force, comprised of legislators, civics education experts, and representatives from teacher, principal, and school board associations, presented recommendations to the state General Assembly in 2014 on how to best implement widespread effective civics education.[28] The recommendations served as a basis, and advocacy tool, for Illinois' civics education legislation which was passed the following year.

California K-12 Civic Learning Task Force

In California, a task force was established by the state's Chief Justice and State Superintendent of Public Instruction to evaluate the state of civics education in California and make recommendations for improvement. The task force met with, and surveyed, stakeholders around the state and in 2014 published a report, "Revitalizing K-12 Civic Learning In California: A Blueprint For Action.[29]" Finding that not all k-12 students in California have access to effective civics education, the report included recommendations for civics-related statewide standards, assessment, accountability and incentives, teaching practices, curriculum development, communications with community stakeholders, and funding, as well as a call to action and tools for diverse stakeholders to bring civics education to their communities. A steering committee was established to support the implementation of the recommendations. In addition to providing civics resources across the state through its website and granting Civic Learning Awards to celebrate schools effectively teaching civics education, the recommendations influenced the State's revised History and Social Science Framework and the establishment of the State Seal for Civic Engagement.

[28] Koch, C. A. (May 28, 2014). Illinois Task Force on Civic Education Report [Memorandum]. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Board of Education.

[29] California Department of Education. (2013). Revitalizing K-12 civic learning in California: A blueprint for action. Civic Learning Task Force Final Report.

TAKING ACTION ON ACTION CIVICS

DETERMINING THE RIGHT APPROACH FOR YOUR STATE

Scoping out the appropriate levers for policy change in support of Action Civics in your state can be challenging. How do you know if your state is ready for robust policy overhaul or whether there are some smaller policy steps that might make it prime in the future? How do you know if legislative action is the best approach versus administrative, or might both approaches be needed? The best way to determine this for your state, is through research and speaking with policy and education experts. Here you can find some questions to ask, and you can see an opportunity chart in the Appendix for initial opportunities for your state that Generation Citizen has identified through the process of a 50 state analysis of state civics legislative policies, standards, frameworks, and accountability models.

Select questions to consider as you craft your state's policy approach:

What are the state's current civics education policies?

- Is there a course requirement?
- Do the standards support an inquiry and project-based approach to civics?
- Is funding being provided to districts and schools for teacher professional development in civics?

Who typically makes decisions regarding education policy?

- Do education decisions usually get decided by the legislature or by the state education department?
- Tip: Look at other education fields, e.g. computer science to see how requirements were decided and implemented

What is the culture around testing and assessment?

- Is there a strong belief that testing should be reduced or eliminated, or do educators and parents believe that testing is important?
- Are there other subjects that have evaluation alternatives to testing?

Who makes key decisions about education funding?

- Are decisions with regards to funding allocation made at the district or state level?

ADVOCATING FOR ACTION CIVICS

Influencing policy to improve the contexts for Action Civics requires the work and commitment of diverse stakeholders. The states that have had the greatest success implementing Action Civics aligned policies are those that have had committed policymakers and strong coalitions working to create robust provisions and provide support to move policy forward. Below are examples of effective advocacy campaigns.

HAWAII STATE STANDARDS

In Hawaii, the Department of Education ensures that all students receive four full years of social studies as a condition of graduation. This includes a course called Participation in Democracy. However, during the 2011 standards revision process, removing this course was considered. The Aloha Preserve Our Social Studies Education (POSSE) coalition was established in response to the Board of Education's proposal to eliminate the course. It was comprised of social studies teachers, NGOs, associations interested in promoting civic educating, parents, students, and academics. Aloha POSSE campaigned for the Board to reject the proposal through collaboration with multi-sector networks, one-on-one meetings with each of the Hawaii Board of Education members, media coverage to shift public perception, and a public comment process on social studies standards. Through these combined efforts, Aloha POSSE was able to successfully ensure that Hawaii's Department of Education retained the Participation in Democracy course.[30]

MASSACHUSETTS STATE STANDARDS AND LEGISLATION

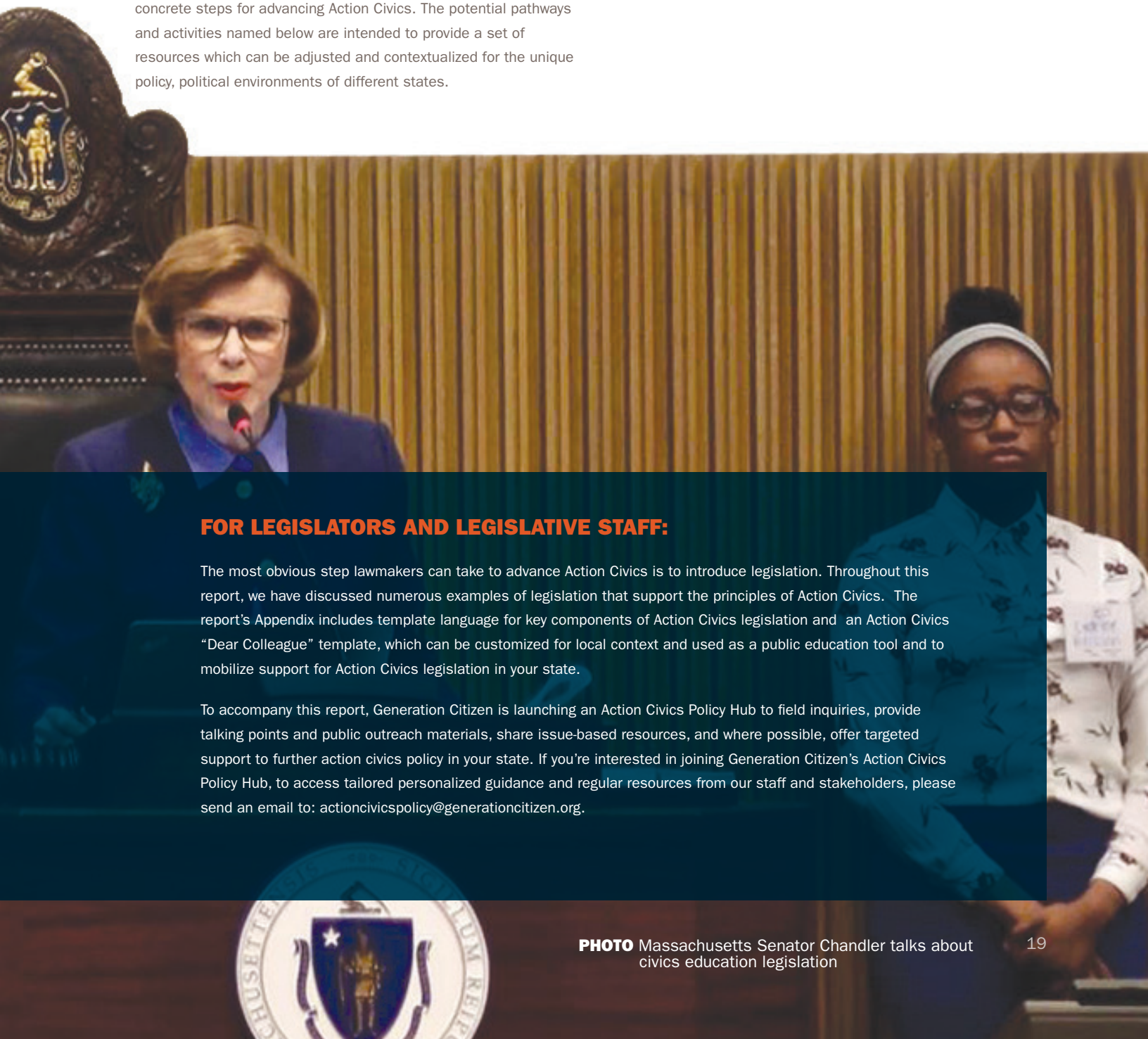
In Massachusetts, there were concurrent efforts to revise the state's History and Social Science Curriculum Framework through the Department of Secondary Education (DESE) and to pass legislation to require schools to provide students with student-led civics projects. The Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition (MCLC), was formed with 20 civics education organizations, including Generation Citizen, research institutions, and other leaders from the State to give collective input into both of these processes.

To support the Framework revisions, MCLC gave testimony in response to drafts of the Framework, with suggestions on how to improve the civics education strands. The Framework passed in 2018, establishing a new, yearlong civics course in the 8th grade, state standards for civics education for each grade level, and the integration of civics throughout the state's broader K-12 curriculum. To support the legislation, MCLC advised the legislature with regards to adjustments to the bill language and its provisions and lobbied House and Senate members for their support through letter writing, phone banking, social media outreach, and an organized Lobby Day at the Statehouse. After the successful passage of the bill through the legislature, MCLC gave feedback and recommendations related to the Governor's proposed friendly amendments. When the bill was signed into law by the Governor in fall 2018, it made history, becoming the first in the country to require all schools at the middle and high school level to present every student with a student-led civics projects, the defining component of Action Civics. The law complements the revised Framework. More information about the coalition, and some advocacy templates from the efforts can be found at: MAcivicsforall.org.

[30] CIRCLE Working Paper #79 Civic Education Policy Change: Case Studies of Florida, Tennessee, and Hawaii

ADVOCACY TOOLS AND TIPS: KEY STEPS FOR ADVANCING ACTION CIVICS

The final section of this report offers opportunities for distinct constituencies — legislators and legislative staff, superintendents and state education agencies staff, state civics commission and task force leaders and members, educators and administrators, and stakeholder groups like statewide social studies associations, civics education organizations, students, and parents — to take concrete steps for advancing Action Civics. The potential pathways and activities named below are intended to provide a set of resources which can be adjusted and contextualized for the unique policy, political environments of different states.



FOR LEGISLATORS AND LEGISLATIVE STAFF:

The most obvious step lawmakers can take to advance Action Civics is to introduce legislation. Throughout this report, we have discussed numerous examples of legislation that support the principles of Action Civics. The report's Appendix includes template language for key components of Action Civics legislation and an Action Civics "Dear Colleague" template, which can be customized for local context and used as a public education tool and to mobilize support for Action Civics legislation in your state.

To accompany this report, Generation Citizen is launching an Action Civics Policy Hub to field inquiries, provide talking points and public outreach materials, share issue-based resources, and where possible, offer targeted support to further action civics policy in your state. If you're interested in joining Generation Citizen's Action Civics Policy Hub, to access tailored personalized guidance and regular resources from our staff and stakeholders, please send an email to: actioncivicspolicy@generationcitizen.org.

PHOTO Massachusetts Senator Chandler talks about civics education legislation

FOR STATE SUPERINTENDENTS AND STATE EDUCATION AGENCY STAFF:

State superintendents and state education agency staff are strategically positioned to establish, and administer, civics education policy for states and districts. State education agency (SEA) leadership and staff rely on statutory authority as the basis of the work, but also have latitude in determining how to interpret, implement, and resource the activities and outcomes which are encoded in legislation. The Education Commission on States insightfully notes that there are essential levers that can be adjusted to include civics education policy.[31] Those levers, contextualized for Action Civics, are as follows:

- Revising priorities outlined in mission statement
- Updating standards and framework documents
- Creating teacher certification programs
- Establishing assessment and accountability requirements
- Allocating funding
- Implementing graduation requirements

[31] Education Commission of the States. State Civic Education Policy: Framework and gap analysis tool. December 2017.

PHOTO New York State Education Department

FOR STATE CIVICS COMMISSION AND STATE TASK FORCE LEADERS AND MEMBERS:

The leadership and membership of state civics commissions and task forces can exercise crucial influence in implementing Action Civics policy, primarily through providing financial resources to school districts and civics education organizations, offering professional development opportunities for teachers, and administering accountability measures such as annual reporting on civics education to state legislatures. In addition to implementation, state-level commissions and task forces can exercise influence by proposing policy recommendations to state legislatures, state education agencies, and in some cases, the judicial branch for law-related civics education. In terms of discrete activities, state commissions and task forces can advance Action Civics, by taking the following steps. Where templates are provided, there is an asterisk:

- Working with state education agencies on social studies standards revision and/or implementation
- Convening public hearings on challenges and opportunities for teachers, students, and communities in civics education
- Organizing civics education conferences for teacher professional development
- Providing resources for the instruction of civics, and specifically Action Civics, to schools and teachers
- Issuing reports and memos on policy priorities for civics education
- Implementing effective practices for state commission and task force leaders seeking to support the implementation of Action Civics in their state *

PHOTO Strategy meeting

FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS:

Educators exercise lead responsibility for providing Action Civics to students throughout classrooms across all districts in the state. This responsibility gives educators a unique standing from which to influence state-level civics education policy. This influence is most impactful when it is channeled into group of educators speaking with a united perspective. School and district administrators can similarly influence classroom practices and provide resources to teachers to effectively teach Action Civics.

In terms of direct service, educators can advance Action Civics by implementing their own curricula or partnering with groups like Generation Citizen, Mikva Challenge, and Center for Civic Education. In terms of direct advocacy, educators can advance Action Civics by taking the following steps. Where templates are provided, there is an asterisk:

- Presenting at educator-focused conferences on Action Civics
- Encouraging statewide associations of teachers to prioritize civics education generally, and Action Civics in particular
- Conducting direct outreach to the state Department of Education, encouraging them to prioritize Action Civics*
- Partnering with other educators to lobby legislators on the issue of Action Civics*
- Starting or joining a statewide civics education coalition

PHOTO Action Civics teacher and student

FOR STAKEHOLDERS (STUDENTS, STATEWIDE SOCIAL STUDIES ORGANIZATIONS, CIVICS EDUCATION/ ENGAGEMENT GROUPS, PARENTS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS ETC...):

Stakeholder groups concerned about civics education vary in size, mission, and theories of change. All such groups, however, are potential catalysts for tilting state-level civics education policy towards Action Civics. Stakeholder groups can help advance student-led civics projects by doing the following, below. Where templates are provided in the appendix, there is an asterisk:

- Starting or joining a statewide civics education coalition
- Convening a conference on the state of civics education in the state
- Working with local policy entrepreneurs like universities and think tanks to issue research on the statewide need for Action Civics education for students
- Writing an op-ed in support of Action Civics*
- Lobbying state elected officials to support Action Civics by calling or writing a letter*
- Attending a school board meeting or legislative hearing to testify about Action Civics*
- Convening an event or political gathering centered on the value of Action Civics*
- Organizing a lobby day at the statehouse to encourage state elected officials to support Action Civics*

PHOTO Action Civics students

APPENDIX

- Opportunity chart for influencing Action Civics by state
- Action Civics talking points
- What Action Civics looks like in the classroom
- Draft Action Civics legislation language
- Template: Dear Colleague letter re: Action Civics
- Effective practices for state commission and task force leaders
- Template: Lobby your local elected officials to get support for Action Civics related policies
- Template: Write an op-ed for a local newspaper or blog explaining the need for and benefits of Action Civics
- Template: Attend a school board meeting or legislative hearing to speak to the importance of Action Civics
- Template: Host a political gathering to assemble a dynamic discussion among key stakeholders about the value of an Action Civics education
- Tips and tools for organizing a lobby day at the statehouse in support of Action Civics
- Draft outline for 25-minute legislative meeting

OPPORTUNITY CHART FOR INFLUENCING ACTION CIVICS BY STATE

The following chart indicates what Generation Citizen has identified as potential levers to advance Action Civics policy in each of the 50 states, based on an analysis of existing civics education policies in each state, and the above best practices for influencing policy.

State	Opportunity							
	Operationalize existing standards with Action Civics	Improve accountability system and/or assessment	Implement Action Civics as a means to improve assessment outcomes	Revise state standards to support Action Civics	Appropriate funding for social studies and civics education	Work with state commission or task force	Increase civics course requirement	Adopt C3 Frame-work
Alabama		■		■	■			■
Alaska		■		■	■		■	■
Arizona			■		■			
Arkansas		■		■	■			
Cakifornia	■	■			■			■
Colorado	■	■			■			
Connecticut	■	■			■			
Delaware		■		■	■		■	
District of Columbia		■		■	■			■
Florida			■	■	■			■
Georgia	■	■			■	■		
Hawaii	■		■		■			
Idaho		■		■	■			■
Illinois		■			■			
Indiana		■		■	■			■
Iowa		■		■	■			
Kansas	■	■			■			
Kentucky		■		■	■		■	
Louisiana		■		■	■	■		■
Maine		■		■	■			■
Maryland	■		■		■			
Massachusetts	■	■			■			
Michigan		■		■	■			■
Minnesota		■		■	■		■	■
Mississippi	■	■			■			■

State	Opportunity							
	Operationalize existing standards with Action Civics	Improve accountability system and/ or assessment	Implement Action Civics as a means to improve assessment outcomes	Revise state standards to support Action Civics	Appropriate funding for social studies and civics education	Work with state commission or task force	Increase civics course requirement	Adopt C3 Frame-work
Missouri		■		■	■			
Montana		■		■	■		■	■
Nebraska	■	■			■		■	■
Nevada		■		■	■			■
New Hampshire		■		■	■			■
New Jersey	■	■			■		■	
New Mexico		■		■	■		■	■
New York	■	■			■			
North Carolina	■		■		■			■
North Dakota		■		■	■			■
Ohio		■		■	■			■
Oklahoma		■		■	■			■
Oregon	■	■			■		■	
Pennsylvania		■		■	■			■
Rhode Island	■	■			■		■	■
South Carolina	■	■			■			■
South Dakota		■		■	■			■
Tennessee	■		■		■			
Texas	■	■			■			
Utah			■	■	■	■		
Vermont		■		■	■			■
Virginia	■		■		■	■		
Washington	■		■		■			
West Virginia		■		■	■			
Wiconsin		■		■	■		■	■
Wyoming		■		■	■		■	■

ACTION CIVICS TALKING POINTS

The following data and talking points about Action Civics can be used to explain the need for and benefits of Action Civics in advocacy to diverse audiences. They fall into the following four categories: the need for Action Civics, the civic outcomes of Action Civics, additional benefits of Action Civics, and what Action Civics looks like in the classroom. There are also examples of Action Civics classroom stories that help to illustrate what Action Civics looks like in practice.

THE NEED FOR ACTION CIVICS

- Our politics and public discourse are highly polarized, inequality is growing, and media literacy is lacking, but the challenges and opportunities we face as a state demand the talent and input of all citizens, including our young people.
- Only quarter of Americans can name all three branches of government; one-third can't name any.

  Source: Annenberg Public Policy Center surveys; 2017
- There has been an increase in concern among school district superintendents across the country about their ability to effectively prepare students for engaged citizenship. In 2018, 74% strongly agree or agree preparing students for engaged citizenship is a challenge for their district, up from 50% in 2017.

  Source:The Gallup 2018 Survey of K-12 School District Superintendents
- More than half of school leaders, including principals and assistant principals, say that schools don't focus enough on civics education and are spending too little time on it.

  Source: Education Week Research Center: Civics Education in K-12 Schools; 2018
- Our nation is currently experiencing a civic engagement gap whereby individuals from low income communities and communities of color participate in government at lower rates than their high income and white counterpoints.

  Source: Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Gould, J); 2011
- Students who are more academically successful and those with parents of higher socioeconomic status receive more classroom-based civic learning opportunities.

  Source: Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh ,"CIRCLE Working Paper 59: Democracy for Some: The Civic Opportunity Gap in High School," (2008).
- African-American and Hispanic students are twice as likely as their white counterparts to score below proficient on national civics assessments. A similar civic knowledge gap exists between wealthier and poorer students.

  Source: Gaby, Sarah. (2016). The Civic Engagement Gap(s): Youth Participation and Inequality from 1976 to 2009. Youth & Society.

THE CIVIC OUTCOMES OF ACTION CIVICS

- Action Civics increases students' civic skills, knowledge, and motivation.

  Source: Generation Citizen FY17 Impact Progress Report

- Students who receive a combination of traditional and interactive civics score highest on civic assessments and demonstrate high levels of critical thinking and news comprehension.

  Source: Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Gould, J); 2011

- Young people who know more about government are more likely to vote, discuss politics, contact the government, and take part in other civic activities. This holds even when controlling for income and race, showing that civic learning can increase the knowledge of all students.

  Source: All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement
  The Report of the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge (CIRCLE, author); 2013

- Students who receive effective civic learning are four times more likely to volunteer and work on community issues, and are more confident in their ability to speak publicly.

  Source: All Together Now: Collaboration and Innovation for Youth Engagement
  The Report of the Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge (CIRCLE, author); 2013

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF ACTION CIVICS

- 81% of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if they received more experiential learning.

  Source: Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Gould, J); 2011

- Civic activities undertaken during high school are related to significantly higher odds that individuals graduate from college in later years, when controlling for a host of socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

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

- Action Civics supports social emotional learning (SEL) in students by supporting the following developments: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness. As such, project-based and problem-solving approaches to civic challenges are a way to advance inclusive learning environments and the development of healthy civic identifies for all students.

  Source: Action Civics in School Districts, (Generation Citizen); 2017.

- Action Civics is an approach to learning that directly supports the development of literacy skills. The student-centered, experiential, and project-based nature of Action Civics invites students to read, write, speak and listen deeply throughout the process.

  Source: Action Civics in School Districts, (Generation Citizen); 2017.

- Action Civics supports a number of key school practices that can help to achieve equity in academic success including: student-centered instruction, project-based learning, collaboration, culturally responsive instruction, and inquiry-based learning.

  Source: Action Civics in School Districts, (Generation Citizen;) 2017.

- Action Civics is non-partisan. The essence of the educational model is in students learning first-hand about the political system, the process of identifying problems, assessing their causes, and developing the skills to address them. The issues that students can, and do, address are generated from their personal experiences and the students' action strategies often are practical, rather than ideological. The local focus of Action Civics typically results in issues transcending party lines.

WHAT ACTION CIVICS LOOKS LIKE IN THE CLASSROOM

REBUILDING A COMMUNITY

Middle School students, in the St. John neighborhood of Austin, Texas came to consensus that they wanted to improve the state of their community. They advocated for the City of Austin to provide funding through the Community Envisioning Project to fulfill a promise to reinvigorate the neighborhood through the repurposing of an old Home Depot lot into a public space. The class started a social media campaign, an on-campus petition, and met with the Principal to open a dialogue about getting the school to co-sponsor their initiative. They also created awareness videos specific to this issue to encourage community support.

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

8th grade Students at a K-8 School in San Francisco, identified bus safety as an issue they were facing in their community. These students rode public busses to school and were seeing vandalism, phone theft, and fights break out on their rides to and from school. They discovered that their bus line was one of the most dangerous lines in the city (according to SFMTA's data) and they determined that the root cause was a lack of supervision in the bus. With one driver, and two interconnected bus cars where people were getting on and off at 3-4 doors, it was impossible for the single driver to keep the peace and focus on driving. Students learned that other buses in town had a "bus safety monitor" program, where staff in orange vests helped serve as an additional pair of eyes while middle and high school students were riding the bus. They joined forces with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's (SFMTA's) Citizens' Action Committee, circulated a petition, and met with the SFMTA Director of Transportation to urge enhanced security measures on the 14L and 8X bus lines. The Director agreed to assign safety monitors placed on their busses on the two proposed routes.

DRAFT ACTION CIVICS LEGISLATION LANGUAGE

Below is language that can be adapted to local contexts to shape legislative language in support of Action Civics. It is broken into sections based on the policy ideals outlined in this report, but can be woven together to create a comprehensive bill that supports the development of civics skills and knowledge, and provides the funding, resources, and accountability necessary for implementation.

CIVICS PROJECT FUND

A Civics Project Fund will be established to support the implementation of sections [**COMPLETE AS APPROPRIATE**]. The Fund will be used by the Department of Education to offer central capacity for standards, models and professional development infrastructure. The remainder of the Fund will be allocated to regional educational collaboratives and districts to support curriculum development, offer professional development, and collaboration with outside entities who can support these efforts. Funds can be appropriated through public or private sources as vetted by the Department of Education. Allocation of funds shall be prioritized for high-need school districts (those that have 60% or more of a student body who are on free or reduced lunch).

CIVICS CONTENT

All k-12 schools in [**STATE**] shall provide students with instruction in civics education as a means of helping students acquire and learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for lifelong political and community participation. Course content shall focus on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; opportunities for citizen participation in the various branches and levels of government; separation of powers; community diversity and historical trends in voter registration and civic participation relative to disenfranchised voter populations; current events; and a working knowledge of intergovernmental affairs.

STUDENT-LED CIVICS PROJECTS

Every student in [**STATE**]'s public school system shall complete at least two student-led civics projects as a requirement for graduation. The projects shall require that students conduct analytical research on a local community issue of their choice, take strategic action to influence the issue, and create portfolios to demonstrate their process and outcomes. The projects aim to prepare students for lifelong civic motivation and participation through applied learning of civics content. The project, and instruction on the skills and knowledge necessary to complete it, can be integrated into existing course curricula (in subjects such as Social Studies, History, Science, Math and English) or taught as part of an independent civics course.

The Department of Education will be responsible for articulating specific quality standards for the student-led civics projects and supporting LEAs in their implementation. LEAs will be responsible for collaborating with schools for project implementation and integration and will offer curriculum options and professional development opportunities. The Department of Education and LEAs may collaborate with outside entities to assist with the offering of these resources. Underserved students including low-income, immigrant, and refugee students shall prioritized in the implementation of programs.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A project-based assessment in civics shall be completed by students at least once in grades four through eight and at least once in grades nine through twelve, the latter as a high school graduation requirement. The assessment shall be developed by LEAs with support from the Department of Education. The project-based assessment shall evaluate civic learning objectives as detailed in the standards, document community-problem solving practices, and assess civic knowledge and civic skills through inquiry-based questions and tasks. The assessment may take the form of a capstone, portfolio, or project presentation.

"DEAR COLLEAGUE" LETTER TEMPLATE FOR LEGISLATORS INTRODUCING BILLS SUPPORTING ACTION CIVICS

Dear Colleague,

As a legislative leader in the state of [**STATE NAME**], I am deeply concerned about the quality of K-12 civics education in [**STATE**]. In order to improve our statewide system of civics education for students, educators, and associated stakeholders — families and community members — the Legislature needs to lead. In this role, we must advance common-sense legislation which prioritizes student-led civics projects for all students that will prepare our youth for lifelong political and community engagement.

[**INSERT AN EXAMPLE OF YOUTH-DRIVEN ADVOCACY THROUGH AN ACTION CIVICS PROJECT IN YOUR STATE TO ILLUSTRATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS**]

To ensure students across the state can access Action Civics education, I have proposed a bill which accomplishes the following [**ADAPT AS NECESSARY BASED ON LOCAL BILL**]:

- A requirement that all students at the middle and high school levels complete at least 1 student-led civics project
- The establishment of a Civics Project Fund that provides funding for professional development for teachers, curricular resources, and implementation infrastructure
- The introduction of project-based assessment to measure civic competency spanning knowledge and skills of students

Please help me in advancing a sustainable, equitable civics education for our students by co-sponsoring the [**NAME OF THE BILL**]. For any questions and to co-sponsor please contact [**NAME OF INDIVIDUAL**] in my office via email at [**EMAIL ADDRESS**] or by phone at [**INSERT PHONE NUMBER**].

Sincerely,

[**HONORIFIC REP., SEN. ETC. FIRST NAME, LAST NAME**
NAME OF OF LEGISLATIVE BODY]

ADD FOOTER WITH:
ADDRESS, NAME OF BUILDING, NUMBER, WEBSITE

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR STATE COMMISSION AND TASK FORCE LEADERS SEEKING TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION CIVICS IN THEIR STATE

ALLOCATE FUNDING TO SUPPORT CIVICS EDUCATION

Disburse community grants to prioritize Action Civics. Utah's Commission on Civic and Character Education provides a good model for disbursing funds. Their grant application provides for sharing microgrants: "The Commission issues grants to teachers, schools, community organizations or other entities to encourage and support a variety of activities which promote civic engagement, character development, and service learning in youth, families and communities. Grants range from $100 to $5,000 and although matching funds are not required, larger requests will be evaluated based on matching funds or other partnerships available."

Authorize commissions to seek funds from multiple sources. Louisiana's Civic Commission outlines language for authorizing the procurement of funds from multiple sources. The language reads as follows, and can be contextualized for your commission or task force on civics: "To achieve the purposes of this Chapter, the commission may, on its own behalf or on behalf of the council, seek, accept, and expend monies from any source, including donations, state appropriations, and federal grants and may seek, accept, and use services from individuals, corporations, and governmental entities."

COLLABORATE WITH EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS TO STRENGTHEN CIVICS EDUCATION

Name collaboration between civics education stakeholders as a charge of the commission or task force. Virginia's Commission on Civics, for instance, is statutorily tasked with working to "enhance communication and collaboration among organization in the commonwealth that conduct civics education". If your state commission or taskforce does not possess a similar legislative provision, consider adopting the aforementioned language in the mission or vision statement of your taskforce. Similarly, Louisiana's Commission on Civic Education highlights the importance of promoting "communication and collaboration among organizations in the state that conduct civic education programs".

BUILD A DIVERSE, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE MEMBERSHIP

Include mechanisms for student voice. Louisiana's Civics Commission contains a legislative youth advisory council. The council provides 31 students with "an opportunity to be involved in the workings of government," particularly through understanding how the legislative branches of government works.

Prioritize equity. California's Power of Democracy steering committee, issued by the State Task Force, highlights the importance of serving underserved students - particularly "low-income students, students of color, English language learners, and students with special needs." To ensure that equity is prioritized, 1) identify student populations that are traditionally underserved by the delivery of civics education in your state; and 2) articulate meeting the needs of, and incorporating the voices of those students into the charge of your commission.

LOBBY YOUR LOCAL STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO GET SUPPORT FOR ACTION CIVICS RELATED POLICIES

- **Identify** relevant local decision-makers who can impact the issue you care about (e.g. assemblyperson, mayor, school district superintendent)
- **Get in touch** by calling them directly, arranging a face-to-face meeting, or sending a letter or email
- **Share** your research, argument, and proposed solution to convince them to support your position and take action to affect the issue

WHY YOU SHOULD LOBBY FOR ACTION CIVICS

Lobbying your local state elected officials is an important way to advance Action Civics. Lobbying conveys a deeper level of interest and investment in your policy objective than restricting your participation to voting during election season. Lobbying also provides an opportunity to build a relationship with not only the elected official but also with the staff whose work influences the official on a range of issues, potentially including civics education and Action Civics.

To support your preparation for lobbying your elected officials, we have assembled a template. What follows below is a draft of a letter that can be edited and sent to your local state elected officials. Note, it can also be adapted to be a script if you are making a phone call or meeting in-person.

LOBBYING TEMPLATE

IF AN EMAIL, SUBJECT LINE:
A critical time to revive civics education in [**YOUR STATE**] with Action Civics

[**DECISION-MAKER'S NAME**]
[**DECISION-MAKERS' OFFICE ADDRESS**]
[**DATE**]

……..

Dear [**DECISION-MAKER**],

I am writing to elevate the critical need for civics education in [**YOUR STATE**] and to ask for your support for legislation that supports it.

America has a civics problem. Recent data shows that only 23% of eighth graders nationwide are proficient in civics. Worse, young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities: students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.

Effective civics education is needed to re-engage young people in the local political system and strengthen our democracy today, and for the future. Action Civics should be mandated for all students across [**YOUR STATE**]. Action Civics is a student-centered, experiential practice in which young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities. In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. Comprised of proven practices for civic learning, Action Civics fosters the civic knowledge, skills, and motivation in students that is necessary for lifelong civic participation.

In [your state] there is only [**NUMBER OF SEMESTERS OR CREDITS OF CIVICS REQUIRED IN YOUR STATE. (SEE HERE FOR DETAILS ABOUT YOUR STATE)**] required in schools and the focus is primarily on civic knowledge, not on civic skills. I urge you to [**INTRODUCE/ SUPPORT**] legislation [**IF THERE IS CURRENT LEGISLATION, INCLUDE THE BILL NAME**] that would ensure that every student in [**YOUR STATE**] has an effective Action Civics education and that sufficient resources are made available for the implementation of such a requirement.

Educating for citizenship is a foundational responsibility of American public schools. Yet there are insufficient requirements and resources for civics education in [**YOUR STATE**]. This is a vital time for a renewed commitment to, and investment in, civics education. I hope that you will make this commitment.

Sincerely,

[**YOUR NAME**]
[**YOUR ADDRESS**]
[**YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS**]
[**YOUR PHONE NUMBER**]

WRITE AN OP-ED FOR A LOCAL NEWSPAPER OR BLOG EXPLAINING THE NEED FOR AND BENEFITS OF ACTION CIVICS

- **Identify** a newspaper or blog whose readers would be interested in your issue and editors to whom you can submit your op-ed
- **Write** an op-ed that draws readers into caring about the issue, explains why the issue is a problem, and addresses opposing arguments and offers a solution
- **Submit** your op-ed

WHY YOU SHOULD WRITE AN OP-ED ABOUT ACTION CIVICS

Writing an op-ed for Action Civics is an important way to mobilize support for bringing student-led, project-based civics education to every classroom in the country. Composing an effective op-ed takes research, an understanding of your intended audience, anticipating and addressing objections to your argument, and crafting a lead to grab the attention of your readers. Here's a way to think about it: op-eds are about communicating a unique perspective within a conventionally recognized format of storytelling or advocacy.

What follows below are guidelines and sample text that can be used to write an op-ed for Action Civics. Ensure that as you write your op-ed, what is below is adjusted to reflect your personal voice and to be appropriate for your local context.

OP-ED GUIDELINES AND SAMPLE TEXT

LEAD Draw the reader into caring about civics education, particularly Action Civics, with an interesting hook. Hooks can vary widely but common prompts are:

- **A human interest story**
- **Shocking or powerful numbers/statistics**
- **A focus on local and/or timely issues and how they affect your community**

SAMPLE *In recent times, there have been unprecedented cries for a robust revival of civics education. Elected officials on both sides of the aisle, academics, journalists, educators, and students alike have publicly underscored the need for more – and better – civics education in our public schools, whose founding purpose is to educate for citizenship. The tenor of recent elections, and the civic upheavals that have presented themselves in the months since, illustrate the detriment to the strength of America's great democracy that a population unable to engage in deliberative discourse, spot fake news, and name the three branches of government, can be.*

PROBLEM Explain that there is a lack of effective civics education in schools and why this is a problem; include statistics and other relevant evidence and research

SAMPLE *Recent data shows that only 23% of eighth graders nationwide are proficient in civics. Worse, young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities: students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.*

As a result, 74% of adults cannot name the three branches of government. From middle school through college, students demonstrate challenges in distinguishing real from fake news. Silos between parties are hardening and we are, unfortunately seeing the ramifications in our daily national discourse, our inability to effect bipartisan policies, and of course, our dismal voter turnout rates which put the United States 31 out of 35 of OECD nations.

SOLUTION Describe what you feel should be done to improve civics education

SAMPLE *Effective civics education is needed to re-engage young people in the local political system and strengthen our democracy today, and for the future. Action Civics, a student-centered, experiential practice in which young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities is a model of this. In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. Comprised of proven practices for civic learning, Action Civics fosters the civic knowledge, skills, and motivation in students that is necessary for lifelong civic participation.*

COUNTER-POINT(S) Predict possible arguments that opponents of your issue might raise nd explain and provide reasoning for your disagreement

SAMPLE While most states have at least some civics requirement, required courses are typically limited to just one semester and focus solely on the knowledge component of a civics education. This is not sufficient for preparing our youth to be engaged citizens. Just as students learn both the different of components of a periodic table and the skills required to solve complex scientific problems in science class, students must learn not just the basic civic facts but the skills for solving the pressing problems in our democracy.

CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION Reiterate how and why the reader should support Action Civics

SAMPLE Educating for citizenship is a foundational responsibility of American public schools. Yet there are insufficient requirements and resources for civics education across the country and as a result, civics class is insufficiently engaging, and insufficiently effective. This is a vital time for a renewed commitment to, and investment in, civics education – starting with Action Civics.

ATTEND A SCHOOL BOARD, OR LEGISLATIVE HEARING TO SPEAK TO THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTION CIVICS

- **Identify** a community or political board (e.g. community board, school committee, city council) and see when its meetings are held
- **Research** the agenda for an upcoming meeting
- **Draft** a testimony to give at the meeting that includes: a little about yourself, your position on the issue and points to back it up, an overview of possible opposing arguments, and a conclusion that incorporates the specific action you want to see
- **Attend** the meeting, give your testimony, and listen to the positions of other attendees

WHY YOU SHOULD SPEAK ABOUT ACTION CIVICS AT A SCHOOL BOARD OR LEGISLATIVE HEARING

Speaking at a public assembly for Action Civics - say, a school board meeting or legislative hearing - is a hallmark technique of effective advocacy. Generally, public assemblies of this sort allot no more than two minutes of speaking time and also permit the submittal of written testimony into a publicly available record. Providing such testimony can demonstrate noteworthy commitment to a policy objective. In this case, it illustrates that a local constituency exists which demands student-led, project based civics education for young people in your area.

What follows below is draft testimony for Action Civics that can be edited and shared at a local meeting. Ensure that what is below is adjusted to reflect the situation and needs in your local community.

TESTIMONY TEMPLATE

Good [**MORNING / AFTERNOON**] members of [**THE GROUP THAT YOU ARE SPEAKING TO**], my name is [**YOUR NAME**] and I live in [**YOUR COMMUNITY**]. I am a [**PROFESSION (E.G. TEACHER, LAWYER, COMMUNITY ADVOCATE) OR RELATION TO EDUCATION (E.G. STUDENT, PARENT, ALUMNI)**] and I am deeply concerned about the state of civics education in [your community]. Educating for citizenship is a foundational responsibility of American public schools. Yet there are insufficient requirements and resources for civics education in [**YOUR COMMUNITY**].

I am [**PLEASED/ DISPLEASED**] to see that the [**SCHOOL BOARD/ LEGISLATURE**] [**IS/ IS NOT**] addressing civics education by [**ELABORATE ON PLANS OF SCHOOL BOARD/ LEGISLATURE IF THEY EXIT**]. Recent data shows that only 23% of eighth graders nationwide are proficient in civics. Worse, young people nationwide are receiving unequal civic learning opportunities: students in low-income schools, when compared with just average socioeconomic status schools, are half as likely to study how laws are made, and 30% less likely to report having experiences with debates or panel discussions in social studies classes.

It is critical that every student in [**YOUR COMMUNITY**] receive an effective Action Civics education. Action Civics is a student-centered, experiential practice in which young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities. In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. Unlike rote, traditional civics education courses, Action Civics is comprised of proven practices for civic learning, and fosters the civic knowledge, skills, and motivation in students that is necessary for lifelong civic participation.

This is a vital time for a renewed commitment to, and investment in, civics education in [**YOUR COMMUNITY**] and particularly Action Civics. I hope that you will make this commitment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

HOST A POLITICAL GATHERING TO ASSEMBLE A DYNAMIC DISCUSSION AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE VALUE OF AN ACTION CIVICS EDUCATION

- **Determine** a vision for the gathering, considering: the ultimate goal of the convening, the format that will best help you to accomplish the goal (e.g. a dinner, an assembly, a town hall, a panel discussion), potential speakers and key guests
- **Arrange** the gathering logistics including space, time, and inviting participants and guests
- **Create** a schedule and prepare appropriate content for the gathering
- **Host** the event!

WHY YOU SHOULD HOST A GATHERING TO DISCUSS THE VALUE OF AN ACTION CIVICS EDUCATION

Hosting a panel or event on civics education is a great way to underscore the importance of Action Civics. The advantages of this format are many: for instance, a variety of views can be shared without sacrificing depth of content; inviting multiple panelists can mean higher attendance at the event (due to each panelist often turning out individual supporters). Additionally, panels and events can be an exercise in coalition building, bringing together students, educators, parents, professional associations, and others with an interest in civics education.

If you're wondering where to begin or simply need a departure point, consider the following suggestions for participants, agenda, and discussion questions for a panel on Action Civics.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS, AGENDA, AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ideas for participants (include 3-5 individuals on a panel):

- Elected officials
- Social studies, government, or civics teachers
- Students
- School district administrators
- Representatives of the school board or state department of education
- Civics education experts (e.g. nonprofit employee, academic)

Sample Agenda (75 minutes):

- Welcome audience and introduction that provides context for the occasion and purpose of the event (5 minutes)
- Introduce panelists (5 minutes)
- Opening remarks by panelists (15 minutes)
- Questions for panelists and discussion (20 minutes)
- Q+A from the audience (25 minutes)
- Conclusion and call to action (5 minutes)

Sample Questions for the Panelists (these should be tailored to the experiences and expertise of the selected panelists)

1. How can education prepare young people for a lifetime of civic engagement?
2. What do you see as the need and value of having an effective civics education in your area?
3. What is the current state of civics education in our state?
4. Why do you think that civics education has not been prioritized over the past decades?
5. What challenges or realities do we need to face in order to bring Action Civics to every student in our city or state?
6. Who needs to be at the table to create a representative, effective coalition for Action Civics?

TIPS AND TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING A LOBBY DAY AT THE STATEHOUSE IN SUPPORT OF ACTION CIVICS

DRAFT LOBBY DAY RUN OF SHOW

Welcome and Overview of Lobby Day:	9:00 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.
Press Conference:	9:40 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.

Separate into teams of 3-4 stakeholders who will be attending meetings together and head to initial meetings

Lobby Meeting #1	10:30 a.m. - 10:55 a.m.	Lobby Meeting #4	12:00 p.m. - 12:25 p.m.
Lobby Meeting #2	11:00 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.	Closing Remarks & Lunch	12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Lobby Meeting #3	11:30 a.m. - 11:55 a.m	Takeaways & Next Steps	1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

LOBBYING TIPS

Come prepared. Everyone in a group should know what role they are playing. You will huddle with your team beforehand to discuss the flow of the meeting and speaking order. Your team leader will bring a set of materials for the legislator.

Identify yourself. If you or other members of your group are constituents of the legislator, be sure to mention it. For non-constituents, you can point out the basis for the visit, such as the legislator's membership on a key committee dealing with your issue.

Know your subject. You do not have to be an expert, but you know what effects civics education and thus the pending legislation will have on the population the legislator represents. Use key data points. Stay focused, be concise! Tie your issue to the bigger picture (i.e. improving the "state" of the State).

Know the legislator. Ascertain the legislator's position on the issue before the visit. If a sympathizer of your position, stress the importance of their continued leadership and support. In addition, tap into their inside knowledge for subsequent courses of action. If not already on board with the legislation, see next tip.

Do not burn any bridges. It is easy to get worked up when talking to people oppose your position. That's fine, but be sure that you are courteous about disagreements and that you leave the meeting on good terms with the legislator. Remember that the only way they are going to change their minds is if they are listening to what you have to say.

Don't be intimidated. You should be courteous, but do not be intimidated. Legislators are there to represent you and are ultimately responsible to you. You should feel completely comfortable in your right to be speaking to them. They are usually grateful for your input.

Be concise and specific about what you want. The time allotted for a legislative visit is usually about 15 minutes. Get your points across and let the legislator know what you expect from him/her. Make your "ask" specific.

Follow-up. In addition to thanking the legislator at the conclusion of your visit, send him/her a brief thank-you letter. Ask for their business card so you can get in touch. In your letter, outline any commitments the legislator offered. If you promised some additional information, you should send that information in your thank you letter. Your team leader will send a follow-up on behalf of your entire team.

DRAFT OUTLINE FOR 25-MINUTE LEGISLATIVE MEETING

PROCESS

1. Team Leader introduces everyone or each member introduces her/himself. Some things you should include in introduction
   - Who you are
   - Whether you are a constituent and/or registered voter

2. Team Leader introduces key reasons for your visit:
   - Example: We are here today to express our concern that students in our state are not receiving an effective civics education

3. Pre-selected speakers share stories:
   - Ideally, each team member addresses one supporting point for the legislation
   - Be confident
   - Be brief so that everyone has a chance to speak
   - Stay focused
   - Be concise

4. Team leader asks for specific commitments:
   - Example: Will you agree to vote yes on the bill?
   - Example: Will you speak to other committee members to get their support on this bill?
   - If you speak with a staff member, be sure to confirm when you will get a response

5. Conclude meeting:
   - Team Leader should summarize main points and main idea
   - Thank them for their time (it's very valuable!)
   - Leave the Legislator packet
   - If they want further information from you, be sure to send it to them as soon as possible
   - Send a thank-you note or letter whenever appropriate and/or possible

Key roles:

- Team lead: facilitate introductions, make sure there's a note taker, assign people to talking points, ensure there's a personal narrative shared
- Notetaker: track feedback to bill and it's different components, whether there's support, any next steps for follow up and who to follow up with

Key materials for participants:

- Lobby Day Run of Show
- Lobbying Tips
- Outline for 25-Minute Legislative Meeting
- Overview of bill
- Bill Summary
- Talking Points about each of the bill's key components and civics education in the state
- Maps of the building

Join us at generationcitizen.org

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