

# Civics Education Listening Tours

*A project of the Utah Civic Learning  
Collaborative, in conjunction with the  
Utah State Board of Education*





# PURPOSES of the UCLC



Build on

Build on partnerships & innovations occurring in K-12.



Help

Help educators leverage research on best practices in civics & character education; curate curriculum content.



Connect

Connect nonprofits with classrooms to facilitate young peoples' lifelong engagement in civic life.

# LISTENING TOURS

Sample feedback from  
teachers and  
administrators



How do you approach civic teaching in your classroom?

*In our focus on the Declaration of Independence and & Constitution, we will read every word. Parents can't get upset about this!*


*My class has a heavy focus on foundational documents, SCOTUS cases. Part of civic mindedness is knowing these documents well.*



Yuval Levin describes a “crisis of faith” in American institutions. Is this something you’ve encountered?

*Yes, totally. My whole purpose in being a teacher is not to give up on ourselves and this world.*

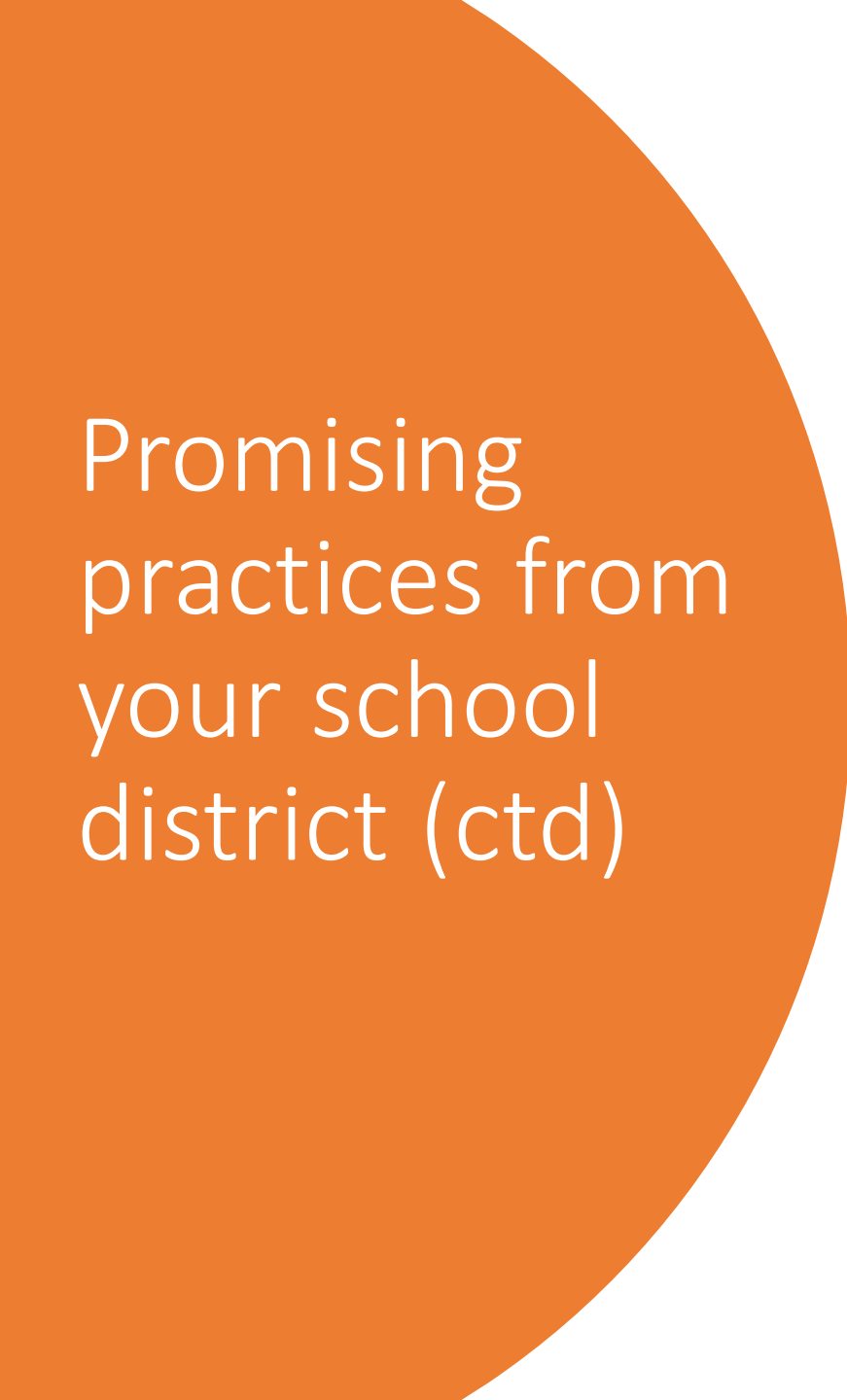
*There’s a reason to stay involved and do good in the world. There are many many problems which we can solve better by listening and working with others.*



Promising  
practices from  
your school  
district

We are looking into providing a civics elective. We are also spending more time on the Constitution and will refer back to it more frequently.

Our AVID, LIA, and Junior Honor Society are establishing community connections and fostering civic pride. Many of our students do not feel a connection to their community and do not care about what happens in it. The most impactful part of those practices has been service learning. Our students are very receptive to helping others. They just need the opportunity and explanation of how it helps.


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Promising  
practices from  
your school  
district (ctd)

*I am implementing a voice/choice assignment for students to pick one way they are going to contribute to society. Options include civic based ideas, such as reading the entire Constitution, and picking some way to present what they learned and improve their local community.*

*We've recently introduced a Civics class for 7th and 8th graders.*

*Our Social Studies department helps students make connections between historical events and current issues. One of the most important aspects of teaching civics is to address the WHY questions (why did this happen? Why does it matter? Why should I care?)*

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Elaborate on  
impact of  
Covid  
pandemic on  
civic teaching

*It feels like I am playing catch up and don't have the time to spend that it deserves.*


*The pandemic has reduced the amount of class time available. Focus has been placed on other factors. Opportunities for guest speakers and field trips have also been reduced. In addition, the recent polarization around civic education has made many in my school and other teachers I talk to weary of pursuing it in detail.*

*...it is terrifying that something you may say can be misinterpreted or misunderstood and you'll end up on the nightly news. I've had to pull out slides from last year that showed the Johns Hopkins Corona Virus Dashboard because even saying how many people have died from the virus while making Smallpox relevant in history is somehow unacceptable.*

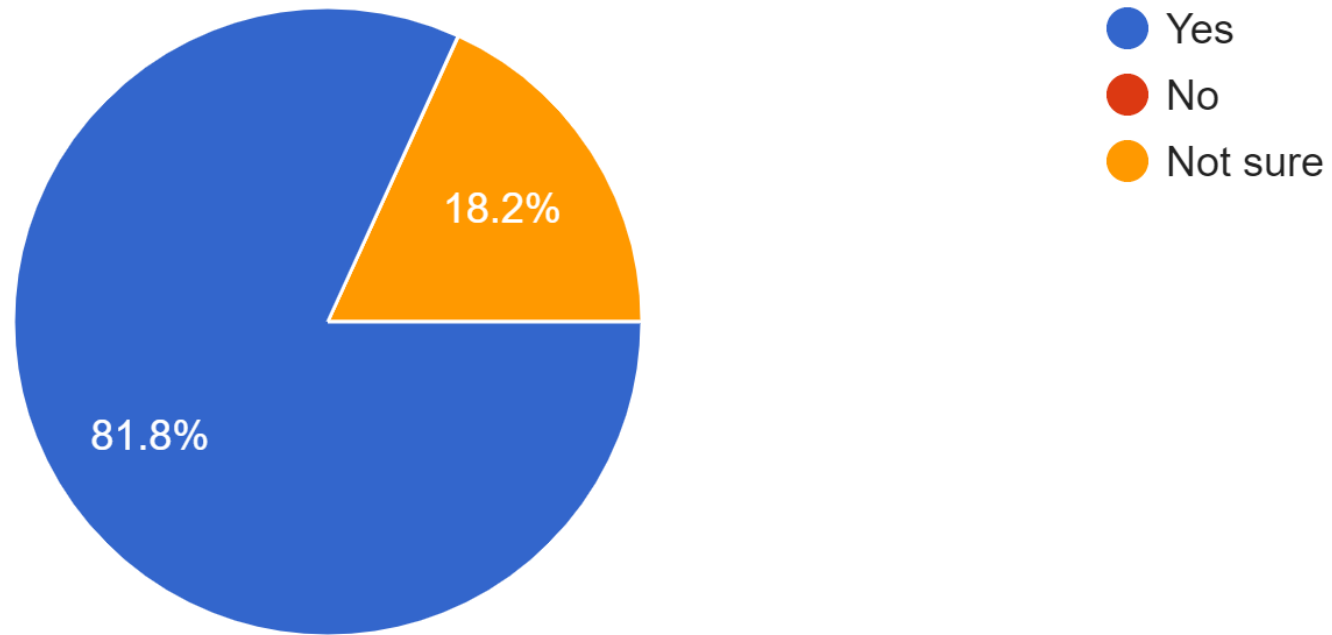
What's  
standing in  
the way of  
teaching  
civics the way  
you'd like?

*There is honestly a fear that you will say something and it will be taken out of context or misinterpreted by a student. Unengaged, non-participating kids might hear something and say something out of context and then it blows up at home.*

*1st part of year we got harped on about what we could and could not say. We wondered what we could teach. Needed to stick with "desk standards" and more boring, less engaging material.*



To the best of your knowledge, does your LEA or school district have a policy (formal or informal) related to civil discussions or discussion of sensitive topics or current events in the classroom?



What's  
standing in  
the way (ctd)?

A: We have a 5-step approval process to show ANY media... This really limits our ability to tie to current events. We have to submit every clip, every image to a committee... It's a cumbersome process. It's very stifling and it makes what you teach very generic and very not applicable to the (students).

L: (world history) We asked our principal can we refer to the state standards as our safety net? But I was told we can't even rely on the state standards, that we can only refer to the "desk standards" (local standards). That was frustrating because our desk standards are incredibly vague.

How do you approach media literacy? What supports, if any, are needed?

L: Most of us show CNN10 as a bell ringer. Some say CNN10 is on the left. This gets us to look at media bias and what that means.

A: We need specific professional development on this! Give me some well-vetted lessons and show me how to use them.

I'm up all night grading, I don't have time to find the right tool. Also need to know the stakes behind the tools.

J: I really don't have time available to cover these tools and skills.



How do you address character and school culture? Familiar with Portrait of a Graduate?

R: The main problem with P of G is it involves SEL (Social-Emotional Learning), but we have so many students opting out of SEL due to pressure from parents.

E: Empathy is on the list of words we cannot say because it's connected to SEL

A: I like to teach the difference between listening to win and listening to understand (and so we can learn how to build consensus).

J: I have recently switched to a project-based approach to geography where students work on natural disaster planning, for example. This gets at several Portrait of a Graduate goals (indirectly).

What does academic service learning or “experiential civics” look like at your school?

D: Service can be done for extra credit or as a way to get involved in the school. I haven’t thought too much about (tying that service to academic study of the issues that gave rise to the need for service. )

R: We need resources and connections to service opportunities in our community.



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