Theory of Change Example: Youth City Council as Robust Civic Teaching & Learning Opportunity

Problems

- Lack of youth engagement in elections, civic processes
- Civic processes, policymaking process/issues can feel abstract or unrelatable to many students; curriculum can feel dry without concrete applications.
- Students may feel disempowered--where to start?

Approaches

- Increase student voice in school & in local community
- Engage student council, clubs, entities designed to support action on the part of students
- Students become involved in the local community through a partnership with local city councils to develop civic engagement projects in the community.
- Devote classroom time to reflect on projects and collaboration to build civic dispositions.
- Info/media literacy units to facilitate prep. for civic life online.
- Make learning about government/civic processes relevant to local civic processes.

Activities

- Partner with city youth councils & nonprofits supporting youth engagement in civic life.
- Collaborate with other schools in district for greater participation and to scale the impact
- Tie city council decisions/processes to curriculum content
- Incorporate project activities into after-school programs & activities to do with family, esp. for kids who work

Outcomes

Positive Youth Culture

- New collaborations w/in & around school builds Portrait of Graduate skills
- Newsletter to inform students of their power, engage others, celebrate successes.
- Alternatives to destructive activities

Civic & Cultural Transformation

- Youth councils give youth effective voice in decisions; City council more accountable to youth issues
- Develop classroom climate of deeper thinking & more inquiry-based activities.
- Use "proof of concept" to give such civic action activities priority in the curriculum.

Active & Informed Citizens

- Make civic processes more welcoming & relevant to students
- Develop youth civic efficacy in political processes.
- Projects also aimed at improving local community
- Students motivated to get engaged at other levels of government, like school boards, state, Congress.

Youth Civic Participation

- Use 'We Are The ones in the Classroom' site to develop student voice in school.
- Weekly meetings with student representatives
- Attendance at city council meetings & youth council.

Youth Leadership/Creativity

- City council involvement for students to organize community events.
- Partner with "Lifting Hands for philanthropic work.
- Student newsletter features creative skills.

Academically Successful Student

- Inquiry arcs develop critical reasoning skills
- Extracurricular & in-classroom activities boost participation (working students have less time for extracurriculars)
- Curriculum content "comes to life," engaging more students

Impact

By incorporating student voice and greater involvement in community activities, students will strengthen the democratic process, starting with the local context and expanding as they mature. Knowledge and skills will transfer into state and federal involvement. Students will be able to make civically informed decisions and develop a sense of agency and competence.

Most of the outcomes are adapted from Generation Citizen and the formal evaluation of its approach to teaching civic engagement.

Ideas on What to Measure Based on Expected Outcomes on Page 1

Outcome	Possible Indicators	Sample Measures or Examples
Positive Youth Culture	• Absenteeism rates of participating students • Student self-report data • Spotlights or stories demonstrating improvements in youth culture.	#MyKearns Youth Council Magnifies Impact with LIA Approach
Civic & Cultural Transformation	• Survey input from City Council members. • Topics recommended by youth show up on City Council agendas • Content for youth master plan	See measures in http://www.nationalcivicleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NCR-Best.Youth_.spring17.pdf
Active & Informed Citizens/ Youth Civic Participation	• Increase in students registering (age 18) or pre-registering to vote (age 16-17) • Public testimonies by youth participants	See Bill of Rights Institute's judging rubric for its MyImpact Challenge contest includes an assessment of constitutional knowledge and civic virtues (helpful pdf). This contest does a nice job ensuring that all student activities are informed by the Founding Principles of U.S. government and civic virtues required to uphold the Principles. See Student Survey of civic participation, skills, values, leadership efficacy, and civic knowledge, pp. 40-48, Gingold. Also see Active and Engaged Citizenship measure from RAND.
Youth Leadership & Creativity	• Youth-published materials and social media posts	
Academically Successful Student	GPAs of participating students	