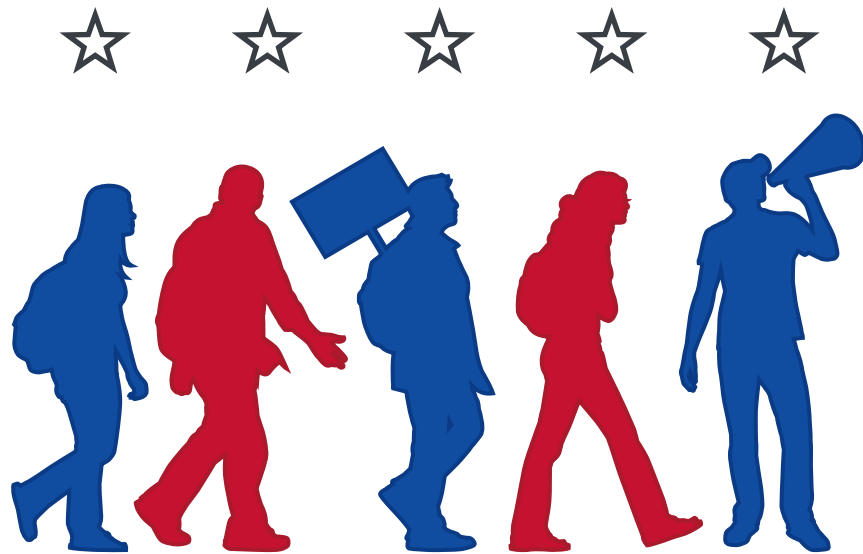


Your Guide to Becoming an

Illinois Democracy School



an initiative of the
Illinois Civic Mission Coalition



Illinois Democracy Schools is a joint initiative of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. To learn more about the initiative and the work of the Coalition, visit mccormickfoundation.org/democracy/democracy-schools.

Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) is a broad, non-partisan consortium which includes educators, administrators, students, universities, funders, elected officials, policymakers, and representatives from the private and non-profit sectors. The ICMC was formed in 2004 by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, as part of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national initiative to restore a core purpose of education to prepare America's youngest citizens to be informed and active participants in our democracy. This national work created a foundation for [CivXNow](#), a coalition that pledges to ensure that every young person acquires the civic knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for informed and authentic civic engagement.

Robert R. McCormick Foundation

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation's mission is fostering communities of educated, informed, and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic grant-making and Cantigny Park, the Foundation works to make life better in Chicagoland. The McCormick Foundation, among the nation's largest foundations with more than \$1.5 billion in assets, was established in 1955 upon the death of Col. Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. Find out more at McCormickFoundation.org, follow us on Twitter ([@McCormick_Fdn](#)) and like us on Facebook (Facebook.com/McCormickFoundation).

Introduction



A healthy democracy—one that thrives, not just survives—depends on the informed and active participation of all citizens. Yet civic learning experiences have nearly vanished from many of our schools, leaving the next generation ill-prepared for meaningful engagement in public life. The Illinois Democracy Schools Initiative supports a growing network of high schools that are committed to reversing this trend, and empowering students to nurture and sustain our democracy.

The Democracy Schools Approach

High-quality civic learning experiences allow young people to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions that facilitate informed participation in public life. Research shows that these experiences also [promote civic equality, build 21st century competencies, improve school climate, and reduce high school drop-out rates](#). The Illinois Democracy Schools Initiative was launched to recognize and support high schools that are dedicated to expanding and improving civic learning experiences across the curriculum.

To sustain a school-wide commitment to civic learning, research identifies [learning experiences and elements of organizational culture](#) that need to be in place. These elements build upon a “[Lived Civics](#)” framework, which centers race, identity, and the lived experiences of young people as core elements of civic education efforts. The Democracy School recognition process—outlined in this guide—will allow you to assess the extent to which your school already embodies these elements, identify and address inequities related to civic learning and the civic empowerment gap, as well as discover opportunities for improvement.

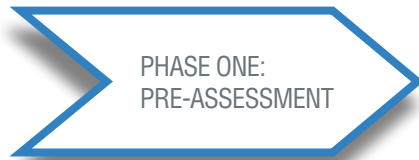
Recognized schools join the Democracy Schools Network, a community of faculty and administrators that support sustained commitment to civic learning through peer-to-peer learning and collaboration between schools. Member schools are eligible to receive financial support from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation to pursue civic learning improvement plans.

Using This Guide

This guide will walk you through the three phases of the Democracy School recognition process, from forming a team of faculty, students and administrators to administering student surveys and completing a school self-assessment. While it includes the instructions and tools necessary to navigate the process, members of the McCormick Foundation support team are always available to provide assistance. Contact Sonia Mathew at SMathew@McCormickFoundation.org or 312-445-5037 with any questions.

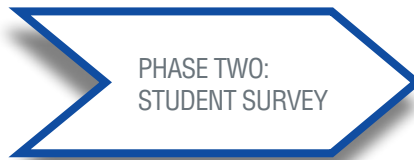
Recognition Process Overview

The Democracy School recognition process is comprised of the three phases outlined below. Detailed descriptions of each phase are provided on the pages that follow.



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: August - October

- ▶ Build your Democracy School Team
- ▶ Review supporting materials
- ▶ Participate in a Democracy School Orientation
- ▶ Generate buy-in at your school
- ▶ Submit a Planning Stipend request by October 31st



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: November - January

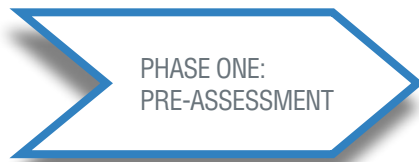
- ▶ Administer student survey
- ▶ Dashboard summary & analysis of data will be shared with schools in February / March



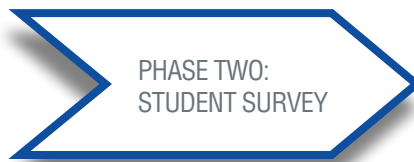
SUGGESTED TIMELINE: February - June

- ▶ Teams work on self-assessment & collect feedback from stakeholders
- ▶ Facilitate at least one Democracy School Team discussion to finalize team ratings
- ▶ Submit your team's self-assessment by June 1st

Phase One in Detail



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: August - October



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: November - January



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: February - June

► **Build Your Democracy School Team**

The Democracy School Team leads your school through each step of this three-phase process. It must be comprised of, at minimum:

- 3 - 5 teachers (who need to be from multiple disciplines)
- 2 students

► **Review Supporting Materials**

Democracy School indicators reflect the quality of learning experiences and organizational culture we strive for in Democracy Schools.

► **Participate in a Democracy School Orientation in Fall**

Participate in a Democracy School Orientation in fall. Democracy School Team members participate in orientation and emerge with deeper understanding of:

- The benefits of improving civic learning experiences across the curriculum
- Best practices for fostering lifelong civic engagement
- Intersections between civic learning practices and Common Core, State Standards, the Danielson framework, and the Illinois 5Essentials.
- The specific connection between the school's mission and the value of civic learning
- The process for becoming a Democracy School, including the student surveys and the self-assessment
- Stakeholders that will be engaged as the team works to complete the self-assessment rubric

► **Generate Buy-In at Your School**

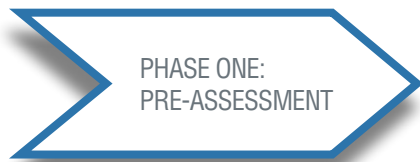
Democracy Schools exemplify a school-wide commitment to improving civic learning across the curriculum. To cultivate and sustain this commitment, it is essential to generate support among faculty, administration, and students, as well as to develop a shared understanding of what it means to be a Democracy School.

The Democracy School Team will inform colleagues and students of your school's participation in the recognition process, provide regular status updates, and share information from the Democracy School Network to build understanding and support.

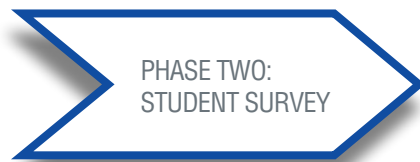
► **Submit a Planning Stipend Request by October 31st**

Submit a Planning Stipend Request to receive \$200 that can be used to cover any costs associated with proceeding through Phases Two and Three of the recognition process.

Phase Two in Detail



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: August - October



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: November - January



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: February - June

► Administer Student Survey

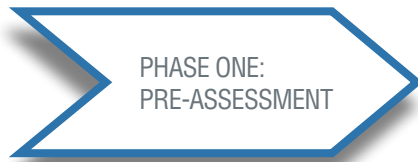
Upon receiving your Planning Stipend Request, the McCormick Support Team prepares and emails a personalized link to your student survey & instructions for administering this survey.

Once you receive this information, you can distribute the survey to appropriate staff. Democracy School Team members should review the surveys prior to distribution so that they can provide guidance and respond to questions.

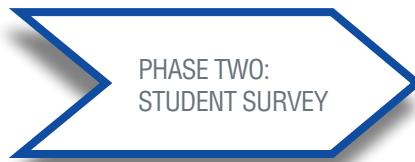
Your McCormick Support Team will monitor progress on survey completion and send timely updates.

Once your student survey data has been collected, the McCormick Support Team will create a Dashboard Summary analysis of your data to share with your team.

Phase Three in Detail



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: August - October



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: November - January



SUGGESTED TIMELINE: February - June

► Review the Student Survey Dashboard and Summary Data

Your Democracy School Team members should begin Phase Three by reviewing the Student Survey Dashboard and Summary Data. Doing so allows you to have context for additional student perspectives to complete your self-assessment and identify growth areas for your team.

► Team Members Complete the Self-Assessment Rubric Individually

- Identify evidence that your team can draw on to complete the rubric (Appendix A is a resource for this)
- Decide how you will gather input and feedback from additional school stakeholders (Use the suggested discussion questions in Appendix B with those stakeholders)
- Each member of the Democracy School team should set aside approximately an hour to complete the rubric as best they can based on their experiences and observations from the evidence they have collected.

► Facilitate at Least One Core Team Discussion to Review the Self-Assessment Rubric

The Democracy School team should set aside 1-2 hours to come together, discuss the ratings each person noted, and review other feedback drawn from the school community. Then the team can come to an agreement about the school's performance on each item and complete the Team Review in Appendix C.

Next, think together about your school's goals using Appendix D.

► Submit Appendix C & Appendix D to McCormick Support Staff by June 1st.



Planning Stipend Request Form

Complete and submit this form no later than **November 1** to receive a \$200 stipend that can be used to cover any costs associated with proceeding through Phases Two and Three of the recognition process.

SECTION 1

Today's date

School Information

School Name

Address

City

Zip

Phone

District

Democracy School Team Members (Please list names and departments)

Name

Title

Email

Chair of Team

Representative from Dept #1

Representative from Dept #2

Representative from Dept #3

Non-teaching staff

Administration

Student

Student

SECTION 2

The Democracy School recognition process requires schools to commit both faculty and administration resources. This section is intended to assist you in identifying the opportunities and challenges that should be considered as you embark on this process.

1. *Why are you interested in becoming a Democracy School?*
2. *As you consider this process, what challenges do you anticipate?*
3. *What other all-school initiatives are currently in progress in your building? How might these initiatives relate to the Democracy Schools assessment process?*
4. *Who are potential allies in your school / district / community that could be helpful while assessing the quality of civic learning at your school?*
5. *What kinds of cross-curricular collaboration exists in your school?*

SECTION 3: Survey Planning

Student Survey

- *This survey will reveal insights on both civic learning experiences and organizational culture.*
- *You will need to administer the survey to a representative sample of the student body. To be representative, the sample should reflect student demographics in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, parental educational attainment, and ability levels.*
- *Upperclassman are preferred given the survey's focus on civic learning experiences in high school only.*
- *Consider administering the survey to students in required social studies classes in one or two grades.*

1. Based on these guidelines, who among your students should complete this survey?

2. The survey must be completed online. How will you administer it (e.g., in a particular class or the computer lab)?

3. When is the best time to administer this survey?

SECTION 4

Print all three pages of this form. Have it signed by your principal before scanning and emailing it to SMathew@McCormickFoundation.org.*

PRINCIPAL (PRINTED)

PRINCIPAL (SIGNATURE)

* Alternatively, forms can be mailed to McCormick Foundation, ATTN: Democracy Program, 205 N Michigan Ave, Ste 4300, Chicago IL 60601