



# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES: DESIGN / TEACHING STRATEGY

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### DEFINITION

The underpinnings of schoolwide civics; the practices, skills, and dispositions that frame civic learning in the classroom and with extracurricular activities



### EVIDENCE

- Team-taught classes
- Literature/culture-rich classes
- Extracurriculars that connect students to issues in their communities (from local to global)
- Classes are taught with a strong research component
- Unit maps reflect civic skills and dispositions
- Formative and summative assessments relate to civic learning



### EXAMPLES

- Civic learning occurs in many academic departments across disciplines
- Students use their own lived experiences to address issues in the classroom
- Issues related to race, gender, ethnicity, and etc. are openly discussed in classrooms
- Group projects emphasize collaboration, teamwork, and student leadership
- Multiple varied sources are utilized and critically vetted
- Student-created inquiry



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Culturally relevant texts: Are the texts taught in courses speaking to students' lived experiences / racial identities?
- Group Projects: Projects are inclusive and represent diversity of thought. What do power structures in these groups look like? Is every member of the group exhibiting their leadership abilities?
- Civic communication skills: Verbal and non-verbal empathy; Students are taught what it means to relate to similar lived experiences and how to relate to those with different walks of life and opinions





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES: FOUNDATIONAL CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

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### DEFINITION

Learning of core civic concepts across disciplines, exploring the role and responsibilities of citizens and government



### EVIDENCE

- Curriculum maps for all courses
- Constitution test
- Student-generated PSA on social issues
- Service-learning projects as a result of an environmental problem in the community
- Student newspaper coverage of a current local public policy issue



### EXAMPLES

- Analyzing US founding documents in English class (Declaration of Independence, Federalist Papers, etc.)
- Using data to understand social issues and their solutions in Computer Science
- Researching current environmental policies in Science class
- Discussing ongoing tensions in US (racial, gender, etc.) as related to power of groups and individuals
- Considering the role of change in history and the contemporary world



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Texts that connect to students' lives, current events
- Curriculum maps that demonstrate a movement towards being more inclusive of diverse perspectives in regards to topics covered and materials used
- Assessments that encourage students to connect their lived experiences to the content





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS LEARNING EXPERIENCES: DISCUSSION OF CURRENT & CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

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## DEFINITION

Intentional discussion of emerging topics and topics of tension in our society emphasizing discourse with multiple points of view



## EVIDENCE

- Student voice forum with administration follow-up
- Curriculum maps
- Course reading lists
- Assessments
- Letters to the editor from students about issues important to them



## EXAMPLES

- Discussing climate change and/or genetics in science classes
- Discussing immigration and whether the U.S. should have an official language in World Language classes
- Using various strategies to promote civic discourse including Four Corners, Philosophical Chairs, Structured Academic Controversies, and Socratic Seminars
- Creating space for discourse on events that affect the local school community
- Developing media literacy skills to understand how information is constructed and received by different audiences



## CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Topics should be relevant and resonate with students' lived experiences
- Reflection on how individual student experiences and identities influence their perspectives
- Offer opportunities and create safe spaces for controversial topics to be discussed
- Informed action/service learning can build upon the discussions on issues that affect students
- Being attuned to underrepresented perspectives in the classroom and supporting authentic engagement





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS LEARNING EXPERIENCES: SIMULATIONS

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## DEFINITION

Opportunities for students to participate in role-playing, problem solving, interactive case studies, and online games which invoke civic learning and engagement



## EVIDENCE

- Student reflections on Constitution Day and Local Government Day
- Curriculum maps from various academic departments
- Student clubs/organizations which encourage role-playing such as Student Government or drama club
- Student government agendas and minutes



## EXAMPLES

- Mock trials
- Constitutional Convention
- “You be the Judge”
- Legislative forum
- Curriculums such as Choices Program from Brown University and we.org
- Model United Nations
- Online civic learning games through iCivics
- Henrietta Lacks mock trial in Science class
- Eva Peron mock trial in World Language class
- “Design Your School” – budgeting, board meeting
- Labor simulations from DePaul University
- Ethical dilemmas



## CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF “LIVED CIVICS”

- Activities in courses and clubs/ organizations speak to students’ lived experiences and identities
- Discussions of power and privilege are intentionally woven into role-playing and case studies
- Discussion circles to reflect on simulations are safe spaces where all voices are encouraged to be heard.
- Simulations task students with making connections of the activity to their local community or larger societies





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES: INFORMED ACTION / SERVICE LEARNING

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### DEFINITION

Opportunities for all students, regardless of academic skill or ability, to engage in civic action by using knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs on a school, local, regional, state or broader level through preparation, action and reflection



### EVIDENCE

- Student reflections/exit slips
- Root Cause Tree Analysis
- Community Asset Maps
- Curriculum Maps
- Assessments
- Reflections from Community partners
- Democracy School Student Survey data
- Civic Action Fair



### EXAMPLES

- Identify community need and use skills from Math course to build a solution to meet that need
- Research and understand candidate perspectives on issues for an election in Social Studies class and then volunteer for your preferred candidate
- Analyze issues related to immigration in World Language class and create a project to address an identified need
- Identify themes from texts in English class and create projects that address community needs related to that theme
- In science class, analyze effects of lead in homes and provide opportunities to conduct lead testing and create brochures to educate community members on the issue



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Projects stem from student interest and build upon their lived experiences and identities
- Projects include analysis of power as it relates to topics discussed
- Awareness and reflection on how identity affects engagement with service learning
- Understanding the unique needs of different groups in the community that students are working with





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## LEARNING EXPERIENCES: EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



### DEFINITION

Clubs and organizations that foster civic learning and engagement which are representative of student needs, interests, and identities



### EVIDENCE

- Review list of current clubs / organizations to assess whether the interests of students are being served
- Create surveys and / or focus groups for students to identify gaps in what interests / identities are not being represented
- Data on the involvement of community partners in student-led clubs and organizations
- Review agenda and minutes from extra-curricular activities
- Media coverage about experiences of students in extracurricular activities



### EXAMPLES

- Affinity Groups i.e. Muslim Student Association, Asian Student Association, Black Student Union, and Latinx Student Association
- Pride / Allies Club or Gay / Straight Alliance
- Service oriented organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Care Club, and Key Club
- Mentorship – Peer Buddies
- Student Government creates agenda around pressing student needs / concerns
- Special Olympics
- Teachers organize clubs based on student input



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Clubs and organizations are inclusive and representative of diverse identities and perspectives
- Membership results in the formation of social bonds through students' sharing of diverse experiences and identities
- Student leaders ensure that power is distributed equitably throughout the club/organization
- Educators work to cultivate student leaders of all identities
- Media coverage about experiences of students in extracurricular activities





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: SCHOOL CLIMATE



## DEFINITION

Schools create and maintain a positive and democratic school climate that promotes students' civic development, engagement and sense of belonging



## EVIDENCE

- Mission Statement display
- Student Code of Conduct
- Furniture promotes comfort and collaboration
- Students have certain areas that they can design and/or decorate
- Disciplinary data
- Student Surveys on belonging
- 5Essentials Data on School Climate
- Student Bill of Rights



## EXAMPLES

- Teachers are trained in the use of restorative practices to address disciplinary matters in their classrooms
- Student work related to their civic engagement is displayed throughout the school
- Peer juries support student leadership to address peer conflicts
- Student handbook and school code of conduct supports building civic norms and values
- Teachers and administrators model their own civic engagement with students



## CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- School mission statements are updated based on student voice and students' lived experiences
- Administrators and teachers attend to student identities and interact positively and respectfully with students
- Administrators, teachers and students reflect on the power dynamics that exist in schools





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: STUDENT VOICE

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### DEFINITION

Schools provide formal, informal, and regular opportunities for student voice and student decision-making that is impactful at various levels of the school community



### EVIDENCE

- Illinois 5Essentials Survey
- DSN Student Survey / Self-Assessment Rubric
- Extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations available to students
- Course/curricular content
- Student-led newspaper / media outlet
- Summary of various advisory boards' and committees' agendas and minutes; assessment of decisions made



### EXAMPLES

- Student voice committees at the school level communicate with administration about student concerns
- Seminar classes allow students to decide what they learn/talk about.
- Student-faculty forums where students discuss with faculty and administration about pressing school and/or community issues
- Student collaboration around assignment rubrics and choice of assignments
- Student input around student code of conduct
- Principal Advisory Board influences decision making from school leaders
- Student government builds policy with administration



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Students have a say in subjects they discuss in class that revolve around their lived experiences and identities
- Representation of voices heard are equitably distributed across the student body
- Students use their voice to question traditional power structures in the classroom, school, and community







# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: VISION AND LEADERSHIP

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## DEFINITION

School leaders have a clear commitment to the civic mission of the school, dedicate necessary resources to sustain this vision, and ensure all students have equitable access to civic learning



## EVIDENCE

- Calendar and budgeting data for PD
- Documents related to process for hiring staff
- Results from surveys given to staff and students
- Vertical articulation of civic learning



## EXAMPLES

- Giving support to teachers across the curriculum as they integrate civic learning opportunities in their classrooms
- Ongoing conversations with staff about civic mission of school and progress on those goals
- Creating community partnerships that advance the vision of the school
- Including students on schoolwide and districtwide committees.
- Democracy School Team represents diverse areas of the school and promotes civic learning in all disciplines
- Budget reflects a commitment to schoolwide civic learning
- Using models that create a culture of positive conversation (IQEE: Interrupt, Question, Educate, Echo)



## CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Involving students in creating a mission statement, and monitoring progress on goals.
- Ensuring equitable civic learning opportunities for all students





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: TEACHER HIRING, ASSESSMENT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## DEFINITION

School leaders have a commitment to hiring, assessing, and developing staff that can carry out the civic mission of the school as well as attend to equity and teachers' and students' identity and lived experiences



## EVIDENCE

- Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching
- Rubrics for Evaluating New Teacher Candidates
- Teacher Recruitment Plan
- Professional Development Calendar



## EXAMPLES

- Students, teachers, and parents are involved in the teacher hiring process
- Professional Learning Community topics stem from teacher interests and student feedback
- Peer observations allow for opportunities for colleagues to provide informal feedback to each other and peer evaluations can provide more formal feedback
- Student Voice is incorporated into assessment of teachers
- Partnerships with grow your own teaching programs, permanent substitutes and student apprentices build pipeline of potential educators for the school



## CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Students have voice in professional development, teacher hiring and assessment
- Professional Development for teachers builds on Lived Civics principles
- Partnerships with Community Stakeholders can strengthen teacher recruitment and hiring for schools





# ILLINOIS DEMOCRACY SCHOOLS

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE: SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



### DEFINITION

School leaders and staff ensure that the school and its community are a resource for each other and that there are frequent and meaningful interactions with families and community partners



### EVIDENCE

- Data from surveys given to parents, students, community, alumni, etc.
- Reflections from community partners on a program or task, where they partnered with the school
- Media coverage
- Feedback from students who work with community partner on a service-learning project



### EXAMPLES

- Partnerships with other educational institutions (private schools, universities, tech schools, etc.)
- Sponsoring "Forum Nights" to gather input from community stakeholders
- Strong relationship with PTO, Boosters, etc.
- Outreach to families of all students for feedback on school issues
- School staff are comfortable asking community for help in addressing their needs



### CONNECTIONS TO PRINCIPLES OF "LIVED CIVICS"

- Students are encouraged to bring their expertise to their communities through partnerships and projects with stakeholders in community
- Community partnerships are created to address issues articulated by student and families

