



# CIVICS & EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## WHY CIVICS LEARNING IS IMPORTANT?

Our nation thrives on educated, informed, and active citizens and residents. However, data consistently shows young people are not prepared with the civic knowledge needed for life beyond high school. In fact, according to a report by the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning<sup>1</sup>, the United States recently ranked 139th in voter participation of 172 democracies around the world, and less than half of eligible young people ages 18-24 voted in the 2012 elections.

High-quality civic education for all young people is crucial in equipping youth with the knowledge necessary for meaningful and effective community engagement, and to bridge a connection between learning in the classroom and real life.

## CIVICS & EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITES

Expanded learning opportunities (ELO) reach children and youth in all corners of our state, providing a range of opportunities for youth to thrive and reach their full potential. By design, ELO programs have the flexibility to engage young people in hands-on, experiential learning. Quality programs complement and enhance learning during the school day and provide opportunities for youth leadership and engagement, integral parts of civics learning.

ELOs provide youth with additional time and resources to engage in their community whether that is through volunteering, project-based learning, service learning, or internship experience.

We call on policymakers, the K12 system, and ELO providers to increase resources and professional development for civics learning and engagement strategies. This is especially critical for underserved youth, youth of color, immigrant and refugee youth, and youth in rural communities. Strengthening partnerships between schools and ELOs to promote civics learning benefits not only young people in programs, but the communities where young people live, learn, work, and play.

## CIVICS LEARNING INITIATIVE

The Civics Learning Initiative<sup>2</sup> stems from a strong coalition of leaders who believe in the value of bringing high quality civic education to our youth. This initiative intends to address gaps in civic learning and determine how the state can be more effective in providing meaningful civic learning for all Washington youth.

### INITIATIVE GOALS

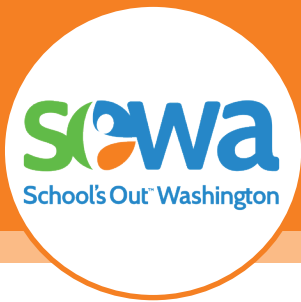
*ENSURE* all Washington youth have access to high quality civic learning both in school and in out-of-school programming - satisfying six proven practices of the Civics Mission of Schools.<sup>3</sup>

*FOSTER* collaboration between in-school and out-of-school civic learning educators so that opportunities for training, programs, curricula, and professional development are networked and shared.

*PROMOTE* equity by prioritizing civic learning opportunities for underserved youth, especially youth of color, immigrant and refugee youth, and youth in rural communities.

*ESTABLISH* local civic learning partnerships.

*RAISE* public awareness and support for civic learning.



# CIVICS LEARNING

## For All Children & Youth

### INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Expanded learning opportunities provide young people with a space to pursue their passions and connect to their communities. Here are some examples of programs focused on promoting civic engagement.

#### YMCA YOUTH & GOVERNMENT

The YMCA Youth and Government<sup>4</sup> program is designed to empower youth in developing the knowledge and skills vital for active and effective civic and political engagement within their communities. Through this program, youth research public policy issues in Washington, practice public speaking and debating skills, and work collaboratively to devise solutions and healthy alternatives to those issues. In addition, the youth develop critical life skills including communicating effectively, understanding and respecting multiple perspectives, and working as a team to generate innovative solutions.

#### 4-H KNOW YOUR GOVERNMENT

Know your Government<sup>5</sup> is a civics education program that empowers youth to engage in opportunities encompassing leadership, citizenship, and life skill development and application. This program focuses on four particular domains including: The Legislative System, The Judicial System, Elections and Part Platforms, and Politics and the Media. This approach helps to develop life skills amongst the youth that foster productivity and a sense of responsibility to their communities. Through their statewide conference in Olympia, youth gain more knowledge on the Legislative process, recognize the importance of teamwork and responsible citizenship in a democracy, knowledge of their state legislative district and the issues impacting their communities. This program essentially connects youth to social and political avenues that they may not have been exposed to otherwise.

#### TUKWILA COMMUNITY CENTER, TEENS FOR TUKWILA

For many years, the Teens for Tukwila<sup>6</sup> program has offered ongoing opportunities for youth leadership, advocacy, and active community engagement through three various long-term civics engagement projects: Regional Community Service Project, Teen Leadership Summit, and Youth Action Day. With a strong emphasis on youth voice and choice, the program's Regional Community Service Project allows students to collectively decide on and undertake a community service project. Through the Teen Leadership Summit, youth facilitate and lead discussions on diverse topics important to them ranging from homelessness to immigration. Youth also attend Youth Action Day in Olympia where they meet with legislators to engage in an open dialogue of issues they care about and advocate for bills they are tracking.



For more information,  
contact David Beard at  
dbeard@schoolsoutwashington.org  
or (206) 323-2396

1. California Task Force K-12 Civics Learning Report: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/cltfinalreport.pdf>  
2. Civics Learning Initiative: <http://www.lawforwa.org/civics-washington/civic-learning-initiative>  
3. 6 Proven Practices of Civics Mission of Schools: <http://lawforwa.org/civics-washington/civics-education-0>

4. YMCA Youth & Government: <https://www.seattleymca.org/programs/youthprograms/youthandgovernment>  
5. 4H Know your Government: <http://extension.wsu.edu/4h/youth/kg/>  
6. Tukwila Community Center, Teens for Tukwila: <http://www.tukwilawa.gov/venue/tukwila-community-center/>