

DYCD Framework for Civic Engagement

Expanding Participant Leadership Definition and Practice

“ You cannot take your freedoms for granted. Just like generations who have come before you, you have to do your part to preserve and protect those freedoms... preparing yourself to add your voice to our national conversation. ”

— Michelle Obama

Civic engagement activities foster the knowledge, attitudes, and skills, that are necessary for youth and adults to become agents of change in their communities. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) defines **civic engagement** as *individual or collective action that seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.*

Civic engagement requires a combination of **civic education** and **civic action**, including knowledge of democratic institutions and processes, motivation to make a difference, willingness to learn about needs in the community, and recognition of ways in which issues can be addressed.

By intentionally expanding **leadership development** practice, DYCD and providers can promote civic engagement across all program areas by (1) fostering civic **knowledge, attitudes, and skills**; (2) engaging in opportunities for civic **action** and **reflection**; and (3) cocreating conditions for civic engagement with participants, through curriculum and instructional strategies, evaluation and feedback, and a supportive environment.

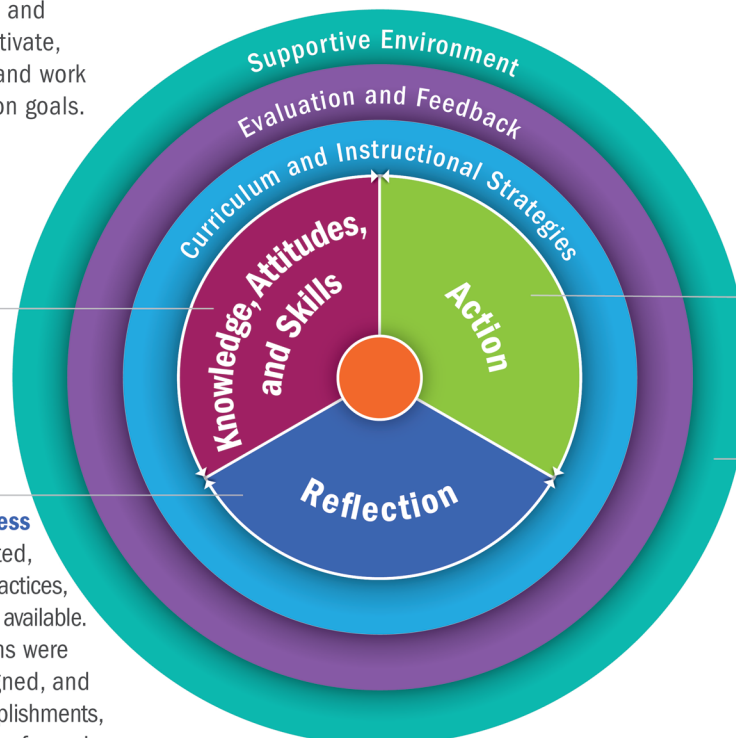
- **Building civic literacy**; knowing about social movements, democratic processes, digital citizenship, and social responsibility.

Having strong inner/self characteristics, as well as communication and collaboration skills, to motivate, persist, inspire, convene, and work with others toward common goals.

- **Taking action by acting as a role model**; motivating and inspiring others; participating in project- or service-based activities, councils, advisory boards, democratic processes, and/or advocacy efforts.

Mastering skills through persistence, learning from mistakes, and ongoing engagement with one's school and community.

- **Reflecting through a process** that is continuous, connected, and contextualized on the practices, needs, and resources that are available. Considering whether actions were appropriate, meaningful, aligned, and realistic. Recognizing accomplishments, making new plans, and striving for goals.



- **Nurturing civic engagement** by fostering conditions that make space for authentic participant voice, choice, and agency. Engaging in supportive environments that are welcoming, are inclusive, and honor participants' lived experiences. Cocreating spaces and opportunities that encourage leadership at all levels and afford opportunities to give beyond oneself.

Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills



Knowledge

- **Civic literacy**—awareness of political parties; understanding the different branches of government at the city, state, and federal levels; familiarity with local, state, and federal budgeting processes
- **Social movements and historical events** that have impacted current civic issues and understanding the roles of different groups in these movements
- **Democratic processes**—participating, voting, meeting with elected and appointed officials, joining in participatory budgeting
- **Digital citizenship**—understanding the use of social media, other digital tools, and online platforms to promote civic engagement
- **Social responsibility and global awareness** – understanding and having a sense of obligation and purpose in acting for the benefit of society at large

Inner/Self Characteristics: Participants are motivated, self-aware, and persistent.

- Adopting a civic attitude and identity whereby participants value civic engagement and have a sense of civic responsibility, with a willingness and excitement to participate in the democratic process
- Believing in the power and promise of civic engagement
- Setting goals for civic participation and/or outcomes and having high standards
- Understanding personal feelings and others' lived experiences with empathy and compassion, acknowledging how those affect civic engagement, actions, and goals
- Following through on civic goals with focus and determination; refusing to give up

Communication: Participants are inspirational, confident, active listeners, effective communicators, and able to persuade.

- Having a positive attitude and appreciation for the democratic process and using that to motivate and encourage others
- Feeling comfortable talking to others and taking action
- Listening and asking questions to understand while paying attention when others are talking
- Acknowledging different and diverse perspectives, goals, and intended outcomes for civic engagement
- Learning to communicate (and potentially disagree) effectively while still collaborating and working toward shared goals
- Changing the opinions of others and gaining support for plans and ideas

Collaboration: Participants have a shared purpose and can convene, delegate, and organize people.

- Creating collaborative relationships and working toward a common goal
- Bringing people in the spirit of inclusivity and collaboration
- Developing and managing relationships; coordinating and delegating the “right people” with the “right tasks” to ensure meaningful engagement
- Understanding the emotions, actions, and lived experiences of others
- Fact-finding—effectively assessing situations, persons, and information—and using information to convey an idea or recommendation

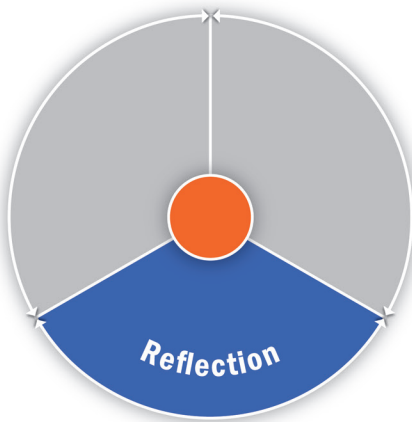
Action



Participants have opportunities for voice, choice, and agency. They are role models, motivating and inspiring others, mastering skills through persistence and learning from mistakes, and engaging with the school and/or community in the following ways:

- Project-based, service learning, or community service activities to identify and work on local community concerns
- Neighborhood or program boards, councils, or advisory bodies within government or other civic institutions (e.g., DYCD's Neighborhood Advisory Boards or Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth)
- Mobilized calls to action
- Advocacy or community organizing around topics of interest and need
- Democratic processes (e.g., voting in elections, meeting with elected and appointed officials, joining in participatory budgeting, serving on a community board, attending or testifying at public hearings or town hall meetings)
- Employment opportunities that connect to civic engagement and support civic career pathways

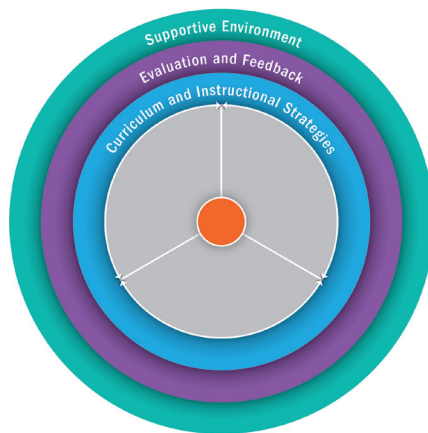
Reflection



Participants engage in a process that is continuous, connected to action, challenging, and contextualized. It is important to recognize that all participants come with knowledge and experience and provide intentional opportunities for reflection before, during, and after an activity or program.

- What are the civic engagement practices, needs, and community resources that are available to your program?
- Were/are civic actions appropriate, meaningful, intentional, and aligned with personal experiences, needs, and goals?
- What are realistic expectations for the impact of civic engagement? What has supported or hindered progress toward goals?
- Recognize accomplishments: What are your goals and milestones? What progress has been made?
- Is it necessary to adapt or make new plans?

Cocreate Conditions for Civic Engagement



Creating the right conditions for civic engagement requires intentional curriculum and instructional strategies (as well as resources and information that ensures participants are informed of opportunities for involvement) and evaluation and feedback. A supportive environment that is welcoming, is inclusive, and honors participants' lived experiences is essential. These conditions:

- Are physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe
- Intentionally foster civic knowledge and leadership attitudes and skills
- Provide authentic opportunities for participant voice and choice (and avoid biases and “isms” that may hinder those opportunities for participants to show up as leaders)
- Encourage participation at all levels
- Offer varied and progressive leadership opportunities
- Afford opportunities to give beyond oneself
- Support relationships and partnerships among participants, program staff, and the community
- Reframe conflict and turn situations into opportunities for growth
- Foster a process of reciprocal communication and collaboration (e.g., “ask-listen-encourage”)

Resources

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