

CLOSE UP: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGED CLASSROOMS



SESSION OVERVIEW: COMMUNITY ENGAGED CLASSROOMS

Students need to understand the ways in which the world around them is shaped by political decisions—often choices at the local and state level—and that they have the capacity to influence those decisions through individual and collective action. This session is intended to help teachers break down barriers between their classrooms and the civic life of their communities. Drawing on research in civic education, youth development, and community engagement, this session will prepare teachers to foster students' civic and political efficacy, commitment to citizenship, and ability to cooperate with others to address important community issues. Teachers who attend this session will be equipped with a series of lessons and strategies aimed at engaging students with their local community through meaningful, student-driven projects and in-class activities.

Session topics will include:

- 1. Aims of a Community Engaged Classroom:** This portion of the session will explore the principles and practices relating to community engagement and connecting students with issues, stakeholders, and decision-makers in the community. Teachers will:
 - Examine a series of projects and initiatives led by youth activists
 - Explore opportunities for student action in both in-school and out-of-school contexts
 - Learn how community engagement projects can enhance student learning
- 2. Techniques and Practicum for Community Engagement:** This session will focus on the scalability of community engagement projects including single-lesson activities, multi-day units, and semester-length assignments. Participants will receive a wide range of lesson plans that promote student advocacy and activism, including guides for letter-writing, planning demonstrations, holding public meetings, and presenting policy recommendations to officials. Teachers will take part in two model lessons:
 - Model 1 centers on the inquiry process, researching local and state-level government to identify important stakeholders in the community for informed action.
 - Model 2 has teachers take on the role of students planning a long-form project, leading participants through the process of focusing on a single issue, devising solutions, and carrying out a plan for real-world action.
- 3. Creating Effective Community Engagement:** This segment will address the foundational skills for student success, concrete ideas for incorporating community engagement into curriculum, and methods assessing student work. The goal of this session is to establish teachers as facilitators for student-led projects, enabling teachers to guide students toward success while allowing them to retain ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Teachers will:
 - Explore techniques for addressing the needs of students at all levels
 - Strategize on how to implement projects in a wide variety of classroom settings
 - Learn quantitative and qualitative methods for goal-setting, student-self assessment, and overall assessment of student achievement