



Civic Engagement
Snapshot



Essential Employability Skill #7: Civic Engagement

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Graduates should develop the skill to engage with diverse civic associations, governments, and institutions that shape, sustain, and benefit a society.

Why is *engage in civic life* important?

Civic life is everywhere, and civic institutions shape our workplace, leisure, and even ideas about the world. Examples include a company partnering with a city to build a splash park, a Rotary club sponsoring a youth camp, a church putting on a 5k run, and a bowling league that meets every Thursday. Civic life is a place to make friends, learn about the neighbors, develop interests and talents, and build the social life of the community.

People may choose to experience civic life passively. They may attend festivals, parades, or enjoy city parks. However, democratic societies are highly participatory, and students can enhance themselves and their community through civic engagement. Individuals and groups can serve their communities in various capacities. They can also persuade elected officials to address a problem through civic engagement initiatives.

What does attainment of *engage in civic life* look like?

Civic engagement may take the following forms:

- **Critical Learning** – Students learn how civic life works—ranging from volunteerism to government—and how those institutions affect their lives and thoughts.
- **Civic Participation** – Students learn how civic institutions link citizens together and how they can join and develop themselves within these institutions.
- **Political Participation** – Students also learn how to engage in political behavior such as writing letters to politicians, voting, and volunteering on campaigns.
- **Self-Government** – Most importantly, students learn how to live their own lives in a social environment, rather than just going along with the crowd.



civic engagement



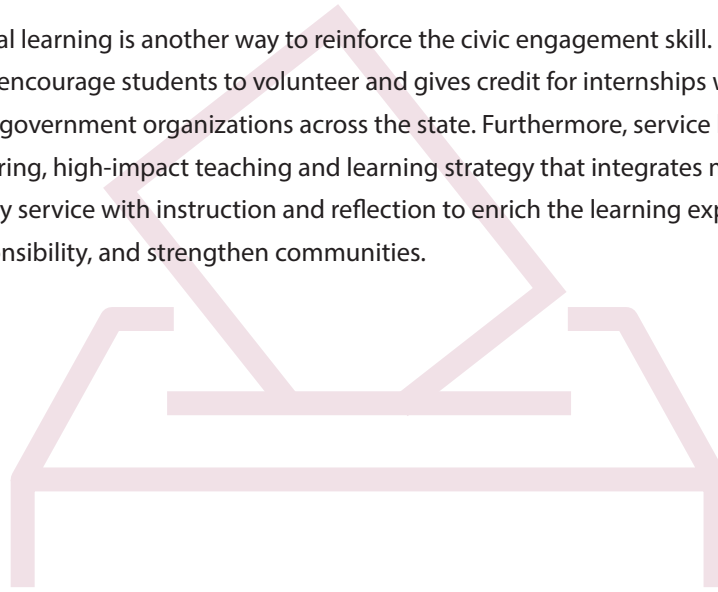
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What are classroom practices for building the *engage in civic life* skill?

Faculty use many class activities to develop students' civic engagement. For example, students might do a group presentation, explaining how civic life works for their class. Another example is a book club in which students read a book about American civic life and then discuss it in groups. Other classes may use in class discussions and simulated civic engagement.

Experiential learning is another way to reinforce the civic engagement skill. Many academic programs encourage students to volunteer and gives credit for internships with non-profit and government organizations across the state. Furthermore, service learning is a credit-bearing, high-impact teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.



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