

MAY 2020

# LET YOUTH BE HEARD!

SUPPORT CIVIC EDUCATION IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY



"WE HAVE COME TO TAKE DEMOCRACY FOR GRANTED, AND CIVIC EDUCATION HAS FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE."  
CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN ROBERTS

Fresno Youth Commission celebrating Council approval of Youth Rising Awards.



*"When we get active in civic life, we grasp our own power. Young people have an especially important role to play- we need them at the table to truly move this country forward."*

*Michelle Obama*

## THE PROBLEM

One goal of public education is to teach students the values and skills to be informed, engaged citizens in our American democracy. The National Assessment of Educational Progress 2020 report said that only 24% of students are proficient in Civics, and only 15% are proficient in U.S. History, with a large gap between White students and Black or Hispanic students. Many students feel disconnected from school and community, limiting academic achievement and leading to depression, behavior problems, and dropouts. Especially with the pandemic, students need to feel part of something greater than themselves.

## THE SOLUTION

The Civic Education Center (CEC) prepares the next generation to meet the community, national, and global challenges they face. Since 2015, CEC has guided teachers to use civil dialogue, inquiry, and civic service projects to deliver the state-approved curriculum. We now serve 29 teachers and 1,600 students in Fresno, Sanger, Caruthers, and Fowler school districts. Teachers guide students to research problems and implement civic service projects with community experts as mentors. Assessments show that students of color benefit from this teaching strategy, empowering them to be heard and engaged.

## THE NEW INITIATIVES

The pandemic reveals the need for new online student opportunities to express their ideas, concerns, and questions. CEC will introduce Web Dialogues for Central Valley students to exchange ideas about critical issues that affect them. This enables students to apply civic values and democratic principles, as they dialogue and deliberate solutions to problems and explore ways for youth civic service. Students interact with their peers and elected officials in a safe online experience. Topics for 5-7 Dialogues during the year will be selected by students, such as access to parks and recreation, racism, pollution, mental health, youth jobs/internships, etc.

## DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

These Web Dialogues will give youth a voice on critical issues that affect them. Proposals will be published in local media. Youth leaders will be encouraged to participate in their school districts and government meetings to advocate for solutions and implement civic service projects. We will expand democratic participation through a spring retreat for middle and high school leaders to share ideas and recommend civic service projects.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

CEC is partnering with Hands-On Central California to hire and train 6 AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to match high school students with partner agencies for community service projects and civic engagement. We will encourage celebrations of exemplary service projects with media coverage and awards, including the new State Seal of Civic Engagement.

**OUR MISSION IS TO GUIDE STUDENTS TO BECOME CIVICALLY ENGAGED AND INTENTIONALLY INCLUSIVE.**



CART Students presenting their Civic Service Projects at CEC Student Showcase.

### **ONLINE STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

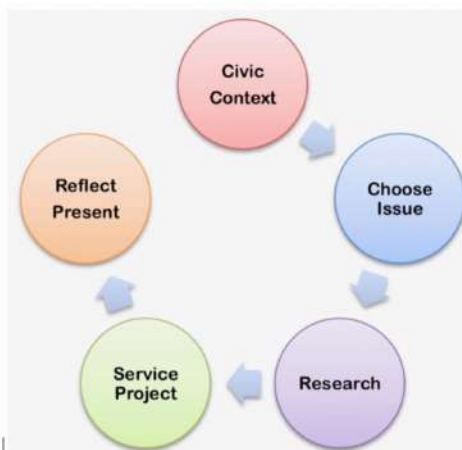
CEC staff is developing Teacher Training videos and Online Civic Projects to give teachers new tools to engage students in civic education and service projects that can be done online. We are partnering with Fresno Pacific University and the John D. Welty Center for Educational Policy and Leadership at Fresno State.



Local Artist Will Portis Collaborating with Students to Paint Restorative Justice Mural at Terronez Middle School.

### **YOU CAN HELP!**

Because of school funding cuts, we need funding from the public to continue preparing students for civic engagement. The new Web Dialogues will give youth a voice in critical issues that affect them and a way to advocate for their solutions. The new Community Service Initiative will connect youth with meaningful service and civic engagement projects.



**HELP US RAISE \$100,000 BY AUGUST 1ST!**

**THE CIVIC EDUCATION CENTER IS A NON-PROFIT 501(C)3 CORPORATION. DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE.**

**See our 2020 Student Showcase and donate to our GoFundMe Campaign**  
[www.civicedcenter.org](http://www.civicedcenter.org)

**WITH YOUR HELP, WE CAN PROVIDE CIVIC EDUCATION, DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION, CIVIL DIALOGUE, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE TO THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY.**