Student Voice Campaign

Primary Content Area: US Government, AVID, Senior Seminar

Introduction
Student voice and choice is important and can be an exciting curricular strategy. When students have a chance to choose what they want to learn, they are more likely to be engaged in the learning. The Student Voice Campaign enables students to choose one issue in their school they would like to learn more about through action research and discussion and develop a recommendation to present to school leadership for action. In order to establish authentic student voice, students need a structured opportunity to explore the issues, policies, and even budget priorities that impact their lives while in school. Through the Student Voice Campaign, students will develop the 21st century skills of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

Essential Questions
• How can student voice become an effective tool for school improvement?
• What is authentic civic engagement?

Project Goals
o Students will complete an examination of issues impacting student learning in the school.

o Students will identify one problem and its root causes to develop a recommendation for school leadership action.

o Students will conduct a power analysis to determine who can help solve the problem identified by students.

o Students will develop and implement a strategic action plan.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. Introduce students to strategies for civic action. The Mikva Center for Action Civics has numerous high quality activities and resources to help students understand civic action strategies. [http://www.centerforactioncivics.org/understanding-community-lessons-activities/]

2. Conduct an initial brainstorm of issues that are barriers to student learning at the school. Make sure that the conversation is appropriate and does not call out specific individuals at the school.

3. Identify 4-5 issues and lead an analysis: Are there historical, systemic, or interpersonal, issues that are at the root of these issues such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, etc.? Are there specific policies that have negative impacts on learning? Are the issues related to school, family, community problems?

4. Divide your students into groups based on interest in particular issues. Each group can choose an issue that matters to them the most. Have them use a root cause analysis graphic organizer to have a better understanding of why this issue exists. Go to [http://www.centerforactioncivics.org/site/files/963/122146/411514/565738/Root_Causes.pdf]

5. Have students tally the most repetitive root causes and as a class determine which root causes they want to focus on for their Student Voice Campaign.

6. Have student groups write their root cause and brainstorm the challenges, solutions, and structures they will promote during the Campaign.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Cause</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Solution/Recommendation</th>
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7. As a class, discuss and collaborate on one or more recommendations that would best address the root causes and challenges identified by students at the school.

8. Conduct a power analysis. Which person or group in the school has the power to act to solve the problem identified by the students? Is there a secondary group or individual who should also be addressed? Are there potential allies or opponents?

9. Conduct a SWOT analysis – what are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats when considering the student recommendation? A SWOT analysis can be applied to a position, an idea, an individual, or an organization.

10. Develop a recommendation with a specific action plan. Be ready for arguments against the group’s recommendation. Good organizers make sure they leave a meeting with a specific commitment (follow-up meeting, specific action they will take, etc.). Make sure to schedule follow-up meetings with the decision maker to track progress toward a solution. Create a template with an agenda, where action items are reviewed, check in on progress and commitments, a new action plan is developed if needed.

11. Engage the students in reflection through writing and group discussion. Provide writing prompts which help students reflect on the process. Develop thoughtful questions that help students address the project’s essential questions.

Community Partner/Resources
Mikva Center for Action Civics http://www.centerforactioncivics.org/center-for-action-civics/

Addendum
Duration
This project would work well if one day a week, or one day every two weeks is dedicated to working on the Student Voice Campaign.

Preparation: Defining and analyzing community, root cause analysis, power analysis
Action: Generate recommendations and action plans; plan and implement an action plan; develop follow through and check-ins on action items; present recommendation(s) to principal, school committee, or Local School Council.
Reflection: Ongoing reflection on recommendations as well as decisions around needs and actions.

Cross-Curricular Connections
This project would work well in Senior Seminar or elective classes.