



ALABAMA CIVIC SCORECARD

TEACHER AND PARENT ACCOMPANYING RESOURCE

The Alabama Civic Scorecard, inspired by data from the 2015 Alabama Civic Health Index, is a tool for engaging young people in local, state, and national civic life. The Scorecard encourages increased youth involvement in political action, social connectedness, and public work. Educators and parents are invited to download and use the Scorecard free of charge. We also grant permission for adaptation, with acknowledgment, to accommodate educational objectives and local contexts. Those who share or send their completed and signed Civic Scorecard to DMC will receive a Certificate of Civic Engagement.

OBJECTIVES & GOALS

Connect and Attend

While the strength of community relationships and social bonds are difficult to measure, social connectedness and group participation are necessary for a healthy community civic life. When students and families communicate, have dinner together, take time for conversations with friends and neighbors, and do favors for one another, they are strengthening the bonds of trust that connect them and increasing the social capital that exists within the community. Students also benefit from conversations with others. When they discuss politics with friends or family or ask an adult about their role in local civic life, it's an opportunity for students to learn about setting civic goals of their own.

A large part of social connectedness is simply showing up to attend local events and to be present in public spaces. Whether it's participating in a school or church group, club meeting, athletics practice, or going to sports games and pep rallies that bolster local pride, whether it's visiting a neighborhood business or farmers market that contributes to the local economy, attending an arts, theater, live music, or cultural event, or walking at a park or wildlife refuge, whether it's bringing along a family member or friend, or mentoring and encouraging someone younger to participate in a group activity, all of these things foster community connection and contribute to civic health.

Participate

Students are encouraged to take political action, because the perspectives of young people are assets to state and local representatives and institutions. Students have a vested interest in the civic life of their communities and in the policies that affect them. Researching state politicians, governmental policies, representatives, and presidential candidates, as well as reading and watching local and national news, helps students to clarify their opinions, become civically engaged, and provide a needed voice within public deliberation. Sharing personal thoughts on public issues with friends and family, in class, online, at a community meeting, or with a community leader and respectfully acknowledging and making space for the perspectives of others in deliberation ensures the strongest decisions are made on behalf of the community.

While the majority of middle and high school students are not yet eligible to vote for governmental representatives, it is important to stress the many opportunities for participation students do have available to them. Youth begin to gain the habits and skills necessary for civic participation by voting in other venues, such as in their school's SGA election, which ensures student advocacy in administrative decisions. Students may address elected officials by writing them about issues they are passionate about. Students may be eligible to sign petitions, online or in person, that express group ideas or concerns. Students also may take political action through their pocket books when, as consumers, they purchase or boycott products.

Invest

Once students understand the Civic, Human, and Physical Infrastructures within their community and have found ways to participate in these networks, students can move to a place of investing in and shaping them through Public Work. Whether it's attending civic meetings geared towards addressing issues and making the community a better place to live and work, volunteering on a project or with a nonprofit organization, or working with others to solve a neighborhood or community problem, engaging with a diverse group of community members to address concerns fortifies bonds and fosters active citizenship. It is crucial to instill a desire for and increase the opportunities available to Alabama youth for investing in public work.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

2015 Alabama Civic Health Index. <http://www.ncoc.org/research/2015alchi/>

“Civic Competencies.” Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools: Educating for Democracy, 2015. <http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/educators/civic-competencies>

“Guardian of Democracy: Civic Mission of Schools.” Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools: Educating for Democracy, 2011. <http://civicmission.s3.amazonaws.com/118/f0/5/171/1/Guardian-of-Democracy-report.pdf>

Levine, Peter and Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. “Civic Education and Deeper Learning.” Students at the Center: Deeper Learning Research Series, 2015. <http://jff.org/publications/civic-education-and-deeper-learning>.

Mathews, David, Ph.D. For Communities to Work. Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2002.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History, Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2013.

We would love to hear from you!

Please share with us how the Scorecard has enhanced your classroom and community.

Young people may also share their Civic Scorecard stories on social media using the #ALcivicstrong hashtag.



mathewscenter



DMCforCivicLife



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For more information, please contact alcivicscorecard@mathewscenter.org