

## WHY STUDENT CIVIC ACTION PROJECTS ARE IMPORTANT IN ALL CLASSROOMS

- School is our primary means of preparing young people to be not just college and career ready, but also “citizen ready” to join and participate in our society. Where else can people learn this nowadays? How many people in this room had an opportunity to learn such skills? (hands)
- Teaching and learning with social action emphasizes community at a time when American society’s intense focus on individual achievement tends to eclipse community needs.
- Teaching and learning with social action incites student engagement. It grabs onto children’s need to engage in meaningful, active, and empowering efforts to improve the world around them.
- Teaching and learning with social action changes students’ mindsets about school. They come to see school and learning as connected to their lives and they can see themselves as learners who have a voice that adults value and respect.
- This kind of learning creates a powerful purpose for students to develop academic skills. Standards these days stress lists of skills, but they don’t explain to teachers or students why they’re important. This work gives students immediate, urgent reasons for acquiring them.
- Teaching and learning with social action enables young people to develop the skills to address problems and injustices in their communities, so they don’t feel passive or dismissive about the social organizations around them. It enables them to use their voice strategically.
- Teaching and learning with social action is invigorating for **teachers**. Most of us choose our profession out of a desire to make the world a better place, but we don’t always get the opportunity to see it happen before our eyes. This approach enables us to help students do that work NOW.

Here’s a sample of what students say:

*Before, I didn’t think I could actually make a difference, but now I am working with people at my church on anti-gang initiatives.*

*It’s exciting to put a plan into action. I want to be able to make a change in the world.*

*If we want to do something to improve our community, we’ll know how to do it now.*

*It is estimated that 160,000 kids every day miss school because of the fear of getting attacked or intimidated by other kids . . . That is sad and it shouldn’t be happening and I want to change the fact that this happens. I think that my work will definitely make a change. (5<sup>th</sup> grader.)*