360 CIVIC LEARNING

A TOOLKIT FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

GENERATION CITIZEN

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COVER IMAGE: Generation Citizen Civics Day

Despite the idealistic promise of a democracy in which every voice matters, our American political system consistently over-values the voices and interests of some over the concerns of many. Part of this stems from the fact that we live in a country in which civic participation is low, youth civic participation is lower, and the voices that are most excluded are those from communities that are, and historically have been, underserved including low income communities, rural communities, and communities of color. These communities, which have had disproportionately little access to well-resourced schools, government services, and community services, engage at lower rates than high income, urban and suburban, and white communities. These realities point to a society that perpetuates historical political and economic inequities. There are many reasons and root causes for this historical political inequality ranging from systemic and structural barriers to participation, to discrepancies in access to and quality of youth civics education, and beyond. A principle cause is our collective inability to ensure that young voices, and especially those from underserved communities, are adequately represented in the political system.

As an organization, Generation Citizen seeks to do its part to address the discrepancies in civic engagement by ensuring that every student in the country receives an Action Civics education in the classroom. But we know that our work alone is insufficient. There are many factors — individuals, interactions, and experiences — that support the development of young people from underserved communities into civic actors. While some of these influences have explicit civic roots, there are many that do not. As such, it is critical that all people that make up these influences and interact with young people from underserved communities across contexts, be aware of their potential for impacting their civic and political development.

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide the ecosystem of influencers — schools, community organizations, after school programs, religious and cultural institutions, policymakers, philanthropists and others — with practical guidelines for engaging with youth from underserved communities in order to support their civic development through their acquisition of four Civic Building Blocks: civic knowledge, skills, values/ disposition, and efficacy. Importantly, the guidelines and ideas that make up the this Toolkit have been generated with, and validated by, young people from underserved communities. They are intended to help each of us think beyond the specific work that we are doing on an everyday basis to have a more holistic approach to cultivating young people as civic actors. The ideas remain high level with the hope that they will be adopted and adapted to local needs and contexts. The Toolkit is intended to guide anyone that interacts directly with young people or is shaping programs or services that will. We must also note that structural, systems, and policy level changes that extend beyond the purview of this report are also necessary to reduce barriers to civic engagement and support the civic development of young people from underserved communities.

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT:

Its four primary components should be used together to help us each think about how we can better support youth civic development and to inform the design of new and improved programs, policies, and practices serving youth from underserved communities, with the end goal of cultivating civic engagement.

OUR APPROACH: # LITERATURE REVIEW AND DESIGN RESEARCH

We began our research process by conducting a comprehensive literature review examining the current activities and practices that effectively drive civic engagement among young people from underserved communities. From this, we observed six Effective Qualities that were shared by them. Our findings, detailed in the resulting report "360 Civic Learning: A study of the practices that cultivate American youth from underserved communities as engaged civic actors," include:

1. Building critical consciousness

2. Providing a safe space for growth

3. Elevating youth voice and leadership in decision-making

4. Promoting youth-adult partnerships or adult support

5. Building social capital

6. Focusing on civics and politics in an applied and experiential context

We used these Qualities to inform the following stages of the research as we went beyond this targeted secondary investigation to learn from young people themselves about the types of engagements and experiences that they feel are, and have been, transformative.

To do this, we utilized a "design research" approach[1]. We put the varied life experiences of young people from underserved communities at the center of the process, and considered them the experts in this investigation — their voices, preferences, needs and desires are the focus, and their input and feedback were obtained at every step to validate the learnings and progress. We did this through one on one interviews for the Initial Research Interviews, as well as small group discussion for the final Co-Creation phase, both detailed below.

In these two rounds of primary research, we spoke directly with 29 different young people (and 3 of them twice, for 32 distinct engagements) across the United States to learn about their daily lives, listen for common stressors and universal themes, and get their direct feedback on some tactical ideas for encouraging supporting their civic development.

The 29 young people we engaged were:[2]

- Ages 14-19

- From underserved communities

- Representative of geographic diversity

- Racially diverse

- Equally split by gender

- Engaged in varied levels of civic engagement

IMAGE: Generation Citizen Student Leadership Board 2018

1 See the Appendix for additional information about the design research process and limitations of our work
2 See the Appendix for additional information about the communities that young people we engaged during the design research process come from

RESEARCH DETAILS AND TIMELINE
SEPTEMBER 2018 - MARCH 2019

SEPTEMBER 2018

LITERATURE REVIEW

"*360 Civic Learning: A study of the practices that cultivate American youth from underserved communities as engaged civic actors,*" *written based on a comprehensive review of the current activities and practices that effectively drive civic engagement among young people from underserved communities and used inform the remaining stages of the project.*

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2018

24 INITIAL RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Establishing an understanding of the desires and perspectives of young people from underserved communities.

Hour-long, one on one interviews with young people in their communities to learn about their daily lives and activities; future hopes and plans; current and anticipated stressors; views on decision-making and change; and civic behaviors and activities. Conducted in Oklahoma City, OK, Washington County and Montevallo, AL, and New York City, NY.

FEBRUARY 2019

VISIONING WORKSHOP

Towards a more coordinated effort for cultivating civic engagement among underserved youth with leaders and representatives from 15 youth-serving organizations from around the country.

Half day workshop to share our research with leaders of youth serving civic, organizing, and education organizations across fields,[3] adapt the research based on their experiences, and collaborate on design principles and ideas for supporting the civic development of youth from underserved communities. Conducted in New York City, NY with representatives from organizations headquartered in 8 different states.

MARCH 2019

CO-CREATION WITH 8 YOUNG PEOPLE

(includes 3 repeat participants from *Initial Research Interviews*)

Two-hour long group sessions in which participants critiqued, brokedown, discarded and built on the insights and ideas generated in previous phases. Working with additional youth enabled us to hear new perspectives, while returning to some of the initial youth allowed us to ensure that our initial insights were sound. Conducted in Boston, MA, Denver, CO, and New York City, NY.

3   See the Appendix for a list of participating organizations

WHAT'S IN THE TOOLKIT

THE TOOLKIT IS COMPRISED OF FOUR PRIMARY COMPONENTS:

CIVIC BUILDING BLOCKS:

Learnings and behaviors that enable civic engagement

Research indicates four critical Civic Building Blocks that contribute to the development of youth as civic actors:

civic knowledge

civic skills

civic values/disposition

and efficacy.[4]

It is the interaction among these four that we feel produces a youth civic actor. These Building Blocks frame our findings and the potential implications for each of the defined influencer categories.

RESEARCH INSIGHTS:

Aspirations and tensions in the daily and civic lives of young people from underserved communities

Framed as aspirations and tensions, these insights illuminate desires, stressors and gaps in the current daily or civic experiences of young people from underserved communities. This framing of our research helps us understand how anyone might orient their work towards addressing these desires or tensions. The six insights were generated based on themes synthesized from the Initial Research Interviews with 24 youth, evolved by the workshop participants, and finally validated in the Co-Creation sessions with eight additional youth. To arrive at these insights, we looked for patterns that presented across the geographies and demographics, though these desires may express differently in each.

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4 Gould, J. (Ed.). (2011). Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES:
Guides for shaping engagements with young people from underserved communities

Design Principles are axioms that should guide the creation or execution of any solutions that effectively contribute to the civic development of youth from underserved communities and addresses the differing rates of civic engagement which often exist between students of color and their white counterparts, and between students in under-resourced areas and those with more affluence and access. They were developed collaboratively by the participants at the Visioning Workshop in groups based on the research and experiences of the represented organizations, each doing critical work with youth from underserved communities in youth organizing, social emotional learning, civic disjuncture, and beyond, around the country. They were synthesized by Generation Citizen, and finally validated by the Visioning Workshop participants. Though not scientifically derived, the design principles also broadly align with the Effective Practices defined in the aforementioned literature review.

INFLUENCER "HOW TO" GUIDES:
Turning insights into action

An influencer is anyone who interacts directly with young people from underserved communities or is shaping programs or services that will. We've divided key influencers within the ecosystem that contributes to the civic development of youth into three categories: in school, in the community, and in political systems. A guide for each offers a practical application of the most relevant insights and design principles, as well as some tactical ideas that have been vetted, iterated, or developed by the young people themselves. These guides should beu sed to inform the design of new programs, policies, and practices that can have an impact on youth civic development.

LEARNINGS AND BEHAVIORS THAT ENABLE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Research indicates four critical Civic Building Blocks that contribute to the development of youth as civic actors. The first three Civic Building Blocks are commonly measured outcomes of civics education programs. The origin of these can be traced back to the report Guardian of Democracy, which outlines how schools can improve their civic education to drive these outcomes. The fourth, efficacy, is key to translating motivation into action, and is particularly relevant for individuals from underserved communities who have historically seen political systems that work against their interests and who often do not see themselves as effective actors in civic and political contexts at the onset. These Building Blocks offer helpful vocabulary when discussing the civic and political states of young people, as well as the potential outcomes of the ideas and guidelines discussed in this Toolkit and solutions derived from it.

HOW TO USE THE CIVIC BUILDING BLOCKS:

They offer helpful vocabulary when discussing the civic and political states of young people, as well as the potential outcomes of the ideas and guidelines discussed in this Toolkit and solutions derived from it.

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5   Gould, J. (Ed.). (2011). Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.
6   You can find more detail about these in the literature review, "360 Civic Learning: A study of the practices that cultivate American youth from underserved communities as engaged civic actors"

1

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE Research indicates four critical Civic Building Blocks that contribute to the development of youth as civic actors. The first three Civic Building Blocks are commonly measured outcomes of civics education programs. The origin of these can be traced back to the report Guardian of Democracy, which outlines how schools can improve their civic education to drive these outcomes. The fourth, efficacy, is key to translating motivation into action, and is particularly relevant for individuals from underserved communities who have historically seen political systems that work against their interests and who often do not see themselves as effective actors in civic and political contexts at the onset. These Building Blocks offer helpful vocabulary when discussing the civic and political states of young people, as well as the potential outcomes of the ideas and guidelines discussed in this Toolkit and solutions derived from it.

2

CIVIC SKILLS Civic skills are the set of competencies useful for participating in a democracy. They are broadly grouped into three categories: (1) communication including expressing and understanding facts and opinions, (2) democratic deliberation and collective decision-making, and (3) critical analysis of political information. They include a mix of "hard" and "soft" civic skills, from speaking and listening to collaboration and teamwork to interacting with people who hold different opinions and beliefs and ultimately being able to apply these skills to communicate with and engage in the political process.

3

CIVIC VALUES OR CIVIC DISPOSITION If one has the basic information (civic knowledge), and the communication, consensus building and analytic capability (civic skills), the motivation or intention to employ their knowledge and skills facilitates them actually becoming a civic actor. "Civic values" or "civic disposition," as its termed most frequently, is the aggregate of attitudes and beliefs that motivate a person to participate in a democracy. A civic disposition involves a concern beyond the self. For this building block, more than for knowledge or skills, it is the confluence of experiences and environments that contributes to a young person's development.

4

EFFICACY The final piece of the civic development puzzle is efficacy; it is the bridge between values/ disposition and action. Efficacy takes three forms: political, personal, and collective. Political efficacy is the sense that any individual regardless of their race, gender, or geography can influence government. Personal efficacy (or self-efficacy) as it relates to civic engagement is the sense that I personally can influence government. Collective efficacy is the belief that a group of people can work together to accomplish a determined goal. All are important for the complete formation of a civic actor, but personal efficacy is critical.

INSIGHTS:
ASPIRATIONS AND TENSIONS

Framed as aspirations and tensions, these insights illuminate desires, stressors, and gaps in the current daily or civic experiences of young people from underserved communities. This framing of our research helps us understand how anyone might orient their work towards addressing these aspirations or tensions. The six insights were generated based on themes synthesized from the Initial Research Interviews with 24 youth, evolved by the workshop participants with expertise across sectors working with youth from underserved communities, and finally validated in the Co-Creation sessions with eight additional youth. To arrive at these insights, we looked for patterns that presented across the geographies and demographics, though these aspirations may express differently in each.

These insights not only summarize our learnings, but also drive the process forward by providing an actionable framework for creating programs, policies, products and other solutions intended to support the civic development of youth from underserved communities. In the Visioning Workshop, we used these insights to spur creative brainstorming exercises to produce a variety of unconstrained ideas, from the abstract to the tactical, that might alleviate these tensions or fill these aspirations. They can continue to be considered and used as fodder for brainstorming

and developing new ideas for programs, policies, and practices intended to address the aspirations of youth from underserved communities.

HOW TO USE THE INSIGHTS:

They should be considered and used to better understand the tensions and aspirations of youth from underserved communities and as fodder for brainstorming and developing new ideas for programs, policies, and practices intended to address these aspirations and tensions while supporting youth civic development.

SOCIAL NOT POLITICAL

I WANT TO ENGAGE WITH ISSUES THAT I CARE ABOUT
I care deeply about many issues… **and** I don't identify as "political."

A strong and repeated theme was the distinction between "social" and "political" awareness. In some instances, an awareness of social issues (usually those relating to their lives, like income inequality, universal healthcare, police brutality, institutional racism, or gun control) was seen as a hallmark of their generation but there was no sense that these social issues were political issues. Specifically, being engaged with "political" issues was resisted, largely for being too contentious, dogmatic, ineffective, or even just passe. There was also a pervasive skepticism about politics as a meaningful path for change, largely because they understand that they current system is responsible for their current conditions (dangerous neighborhoods, underfunded schools, etc), and they don't see anyone like them in this system.

IN THEIR WORDS

"I mean, I'm scared to death of school shootings, so I care a lot about gun control, but I'm not political."

"I look around every day and I know that the government is the reason my neighborhood is like this — run down and dangerous…. But I mean, I don't know politics very well. It's is all about fighting and I don't really want to get in the middle of all that."

"Politics just seems like a serious topic for adults. When my family discusses it at the table, they ask me to leave — I guess I'll be able to stay when I'm 18 maybe? But of course I already have some opinions."

APPLIED VALUES

I WANT TO EXTEND MY PERSONAL VALUES TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ISSUES
I have core values that I can express and try to live by…**and** I'm not always sure how to apply them outside my personal life.

The young people we spoke to were strong willed and confident in their views of the world. Many of them expressed strong core values, like fairness or pragmatism, but mostly didn't think of values outside of their personal lives related to social or political issues. While many of the young people we spoke with were deeply concerned about many relevant issues, from housing affordability, to public transportation, there seemed to be a missing link between these issues and what they thought or knew to do about it. Overall, they were relatively unaware of the paths to make change, including the resources and tools they might utilize and the relevant decision makers. For those who could name paths to change, they expressed a sense of disenchantment with them, skeptical of their ability to be effective.

IN THEIR WORDS

"Most of these things I don't really feel qualified to speak about. Like I know this wall is a big issue, but I don't know enough about immigration to get all the sides."

"I really care about stray animals — you see them all over the city and it makes me really sad. I don't know what to do about it though."

"I have plenty of friends that would describe themselves as woke, and say it's important to be woke — but that doesn't mean that they'll actually attend a protest or anything. I mean, they might do that, if their friends were going, but they're not going to seek it out, and they probably won't vote or anything like that"

CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION

I WANT THE SPACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD AND USE MY VOICE

I have plenty to say and real expertise based on my own experiences...**and** contentious conversation can be intimidating and spaces are usually dominated by adults or a few loud voices.

Young people have strong opinions about the things that affect their lives yet often don't feel as though they have the opportunity to share them. Seldom are they asked and even where an opportunity may arise, they can feel discouraged from sharing because they feel their voices won't be heard and respected, or they're too afraid that what they have to say will be challenged. Students were able to identify specific opportunities when they were able to safely share their points of view and have them heard and validated and pointed to them, and the adults or peers who facilitated them, as valuable.

IN THEIR WORDS

"I actually think that students want to care — or they do care — but are afraid to speak out. That is, they're afraid to stand alone."

"We all have ideas how things could be better in our school. We're just waiting for someone to ask us. No one ever asks our opinion."

"When I spent a day at the State House, that was really cool. Just being in the building and seeing other kids like me in the building, it made me realize that I was allowed in there, that I could be in there and share my opinion just like everyone else."

FUTURE PLANNING

I WANT TO SEE HOW I CAN ACHIEVE THE FUTURE I IMAGINE

I deserve respect and to be treated like an adult... **and** I am still developing my understanding of how the world works.

Young people from underserved communities feel constrained by their economic realities when thinking about their future, but there aren't many resources to help them understand how to work to achieve their dreams and goals within these constraints. Despite the economic pressures, they are also quick to add personal fulfillment and happiness as indicators of success. In addition, many of them already have very adult responsibilities, from childcare to contributing to the household income.

IN THEIR WORDS

"I want to be a vet. I've always loved animals and want to have a big farm one day... But I don't know about college, it's just so expensive. I don't know how it's really possible to make it happen."

"In the future I might be interested in voting or working in my community or something like that, but only after I have a job that I know is good and feel like I can buy a house or take care of my family."

"It'd be great to learn any skills in high school that actually were related to helping us take care of ourselves, like how to make money or run a business."

IMPACT AMBITION

I WANT TO BE IMPACTFUL (NOW AND LATER)

I want to make a difference... **and** I don't feel effectual in a larger system. I'm just one person.

Young people are driven to have a purpose and have a positive impact on the people and places that matter to them. Many we spoke to indicated that they lack the knowledge and also the respect from decision making adults to make a real impact. For instance, many didn't have a concrete grasp of how their local governments worked in order to make meaningful change through it. Yet even when they seemed to think they could figure it out, they weren't sure that their single voice — especially given its youthfulness — would be meaningful in any change efforts given the general lack of respect as authorities and influencers they sense from adults.

IN THEIR WORDS

"I think it's really important to take care of your community — I'll probably come back to this town when I'm older and then I'll be able to help. Once I have money."

"The generation these days, it's everyone on their phone. Everything on the internet, they think it's true. I think there's opportunity to have influence but you'd have to work really hard for that. The big people like the president, governors has the most influence if they made laws. If I wanted to go out and speak for Latinos, I don't think that would help."

"I think what really changed my thinking is when I saw kids my age actually doing things. Like, the student walkout against gun violence that was all organized by students — the faculty didn't really want it to happen, but the students made it happen. That was really cool."

VOTING NAVIGATION

I WANT TO FEEL READY TO VOTE WHEN THE TIME COMES

I know that if I'm a Citizen, I'm supposed to vote... **and** I'm not sure how or why; I'm not sure I trust the system.

Though there are many ways to perform civic engagement, voting is often the most universally familiar and often the first exposure to any formal political system. Knowing this, anything less than an easy, celebrated, and powerful voting experience is a lost opportunity. Unfortunately, the opposite experience is frequently the reality. Even those who plan on voting and are excited to engage often have no idea how to go about it, or why it matters. We heard students talk about voting as a responsibility, as an expression of opinion, and as a route to change. However, none could follow up on why or how these were true. Their motivators for voting were largely extrinsic, repeated phrases from parents or teachers, as opposed to intrinsic, value-driven behaviors.

IN THEIR WORDS

"Yeah I've heard that we're supposed to vote, but no one tell us why."

"Yeah of course I plan on voting — it seems like everyone votes these days, even Taylor Swift… But I have to register? What's that?"

"Why would we go vote? We have no idea what we're voting for. What are these roles and who are these people?"

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

GUIDES FOR SHAPING ENGAGEMENTS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FROM UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Design Principles are axioms that should guide the creation or execution of any solutions that effectively contribute to the civic development of youth from underserved communities and addresses the differing rates of civic engagement which often exist between students of color and their white counterparts, and between students in under-resourced areas and those with more affluence and access. They were developed collaboratively by the participants at the Visioning Workshop in groups based on the research and experiences of the represented organizations, each doing critical work with youth from underserved communities in youth organizing, social emotional learning, civic disjuncture, and beyond, around the country. They were synthesized by Generation Citizen, and finally validated by the Visioning Workshop participants. Though not scientifically derived, the design principles also broadly align with the Effective Practices defined in the aforementioned literature review.

HOW TO USE THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

They should guide and underpin the creation or execution of each part of a solution that effectively contributes to the civic development of youth from underserved communities.

ANY IDEA OR SOLUTION AIMED TO SUPPORT THE CIVIC DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH FROM UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE:

- Youth Centered
- Grounded in Context
- Emotionally Supportive
- Activating
- Courageously Resilient

YOUTH-CENTERED It is critical that we put young people at the center and origin of any initiative. Specifically, they should be both involved in initial creation and encouraged to steer the direction through constant leadership, feedback and iteration; this ensures a solution that is most meaningful and equips youth with confidence and the skills they've identified as important. Tapping into their varied experiences and expertise validates their lived experiences and empowers and reflects their voices. In a youth-centered approach, the adults are enablers and stewards of the opportunity — not the gatekeepers of power and knowledge. Successful youth-centered efforts require a clear perspective of youth as whole and agentic people, eliminating the notion that young people are unworthy or incapable of action of consequence.

GROUNDED IN CONTEXT Effective solutions are rooted in specific community histories and structures as well as the lived experiences of young people, their peers, and the communities that surround them. They enrich traditional historical narratives by incorporating and highlighting communities' unique histories. A rich context means a solution that is both relevant to the young person's life, and accounts for structures and systems that have informed how they and their communities exist as they do. This quality both positions youth to reimagine and challenge the current systems and also promotes healing, understanding, a sense of civic responsibility, and the possibility of transformation.

EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTIVE Offering a space to fail and learn from mistakes is critical to psychological safety, and emboldens the young people to take risks and express themselves fully. It is only in an open and supportive environment that allows for social and emotional development, that young people can truly reflect on their lived experiences and contexts, including systemic oppression, in a meaningful way and process the challenging

work that they're engaging in on their path to a better future. Opportunities for play also promote exploration, creativity, and curiosity where young people can safely make mistakes, and explore and enjoy the process. This promotes true learning, with the emphasis on the effort and the trials, rather on the final product. Notably, individuals and groups providing emotionally supportive spaces to allow for the spectrum of opportunities described here, must be appropriately trained to do so effectively.

ACTIVATING Solutions should be designed to drive and invite both individual and collective action. It is critical that all young people realize their own power potential, assets, and resources -- and how to utilize and organize them to drive change. This can take numerous forms and take place in diverse contexts and locations but whatever the outlet, the goal is active community and civic participation.

COURAGEOUSLY RESILIENT In the face of systemic oppression whereby people from underserved communities have been formally and informally excluded from the political process, solutions must be bold, courageous, and transformational, and must imbue the young people with the same qualities. This work may encounter obstacles including resistance and dismissal, and thus will require both urgency of action, as well as resilience and determination, for sustainable, systemic impact. However it is only with this endurance and collective action that we can fundamentally transform the inequitable systems in which we live and realize the inclusive promise of democratic governance and each be truly represented in our systems of decision making.

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION

The following guides are intended to demonstrate how this research might be applied for a variety of practitioners and audiences. An influencer is anyone who interacts directly with young people from underserved communities or is shaping programs or services that will. Every member of the ecosystem of influence over young people's development could improve their efforts to engage young people as whole people, soliciting and validating their opinions, thoughtfully considering their hopes and dreams, and asking "How can I support you?"

While young people, like all of us, are influenced by the individuals and contexts that surround us, it is critical to foreground youth as agentic individuals. Overall, young people face a onslaught of adultism — from their teachers, their parents, their coaches, and even their peers, who have accepted this culturally pervasive mentality. Everyday, young people are reminded of this supposed subservience or inferiority to adults; they are not taken seriously, and are often dismissed outright. When these young people turn 18, our collective social expectation is that they have emerged from "childhood" fully formed members of society, who are prepared with confident expressions of opinion. As a universal note, it is incumbent upon all of us in the ecosystem of influence to invert this and demonstrate value to youth voice, perspective, and power.

Each of the following guides provides any number of roles in the identified realm of influence with noteworthy observations from our interviews and the relevant ideas that the youth participants selected as of interest and helped develop. While there are specific examples that illustrate the insights and suggestions, the guides are meant to be high level so that that they can be developed and adapted based on local needs and contexts. They should be considered in tandem with the Design Principles and Insights previously outlined. In some ways, the school setting bears the biggest burden of responsibility as the unique space through which every young person passes -- but the process of becoming a civic actor is influenced and shaped by each interaction of a young person's life, from the time they are able to express opinions and preferences.

HOW TO USE THE "HOW TO" GUIDES:

They should be considered in tandem with the Design Principles and Insights previously outlined to inform, develop, and adapt high level ideas and solutions for supporting youth civic development in broad opportunity areas, while accounting for local needs and contexts.

THE THREE OPPORTUNITY AREAS

IN SCHOOLS As young people are already spending their days in school or school-related activities, this is the most accessible opportunity for improving engagement in a way that drives civic development. However, while it is the most accessible, it also can be the most challenging because of the existing hierarchical structures and norms that are often anti-democratic and such, counter to the skills- and self-development that promote civic action.

IN THE COMMUNITY The immediate physical community is a ripe, albeit nebulous, environment for intervention. It has also historically been the space in which youth from underserved communities have been best supported in their civic development. It includes a wide variety of players, ranging from those who have explicit civic intent and those whose goals are more broad. However, there are likely some tweaks that almost any existing player in this space could make to more proactively encourage civic development of young people.

IN POLITICAL SYSTEMS Formal political channels are the least accessible of these environments to young people from underserved communities — which also means they are the biggest opportunity for growth and change. Limited existing practices means a chance to build something novel and well-crafted. Many young people from underserved areas are acutely aware of the fact that the systems have often hurt their communities and that they rarely see anyone who looks like them in political systems. This can foster a sense of being an outsider, which leaves them skeptical of the process in general. The political system, and in particular, local elected individuals and administrative bodies, needs to approach these young people with a learning-oriented mindset, ready and willing to listen and support however possible.

A note to other community influencers including philanthropists and policymakers

Philanthropists, policymakers, and others who wield power and influence in a community can also benefit from and should consider the principles, insights, and recommendations laid out in this Toolkit as they determine where and how to allocate resources. Too often, decisions regarding where funding is allocated and what laws are passed occur in silos, ignoring the comprehensive diverse inputs that inform student outcomes. These groups may benefit from a more holistic approach to their decision making in order to ensure optimal, and equitable outcomes.

USING THIS TOOLKIT... IN SCHOOLS
## FOR EDUCATORS, ADMINISTRATORS, PEERS, TUTORS, COACHES, ETC

The young people we spoke with are incredibly savvy about the failures and inadequacies of their schools, and consistently frustrated by these conditions. Across the board, students were quick to make distinctions between teachers "who care" and teachers "who just have a job," and often remarked on a variety of poor conditions in their school, from funding (or lack of), over-funded sports teams, districts with schools that need consolidating, or poor lunch quality. These conditions can prevent young people from realizing their power as there is a daily reminder of these institutions' disinterest in their input, with an occasional bright spot from a teacher who falls into the "cares" category.

Additionally, they are very tuned into the biases in the classroom, and often feel — and indeed are — left out of the narratives presented by their history or government textbooks. Specifically, it is critical that students' lived experiences are validated in the school setting in order to boost their belief in institutional routes to change.

"I think all of this thinking has to start in the classroom — I mean, it's safer than the real world. But I also think that most of my teachers don't really respect us, so I'm not sure how that will even happen."

"It would be great if there was a chance for the teachers to be the students, just for a day. I'd love to tell them, in a respectful manner, what kind of learning actually works for me, and how they can actually support us."

"I feel like teachers are always kinda crushing our dreams, and it's probably subconsciously, but they're always like 'Be realistic' or 'How can that actually happen?'"

IMAGE: Julian Viviescas at Student Leadership Board Retreat 2018

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR SCHOOLS

Young people are often frustrated by their lack of agency and the systems of control in school. They have ideas for improvements, but feel no ownership over this domain, despite it existing ostensibly "for them." When a teacher or other authority figure does show personal interest in and care for a student, they take note and demonstrate increased motivation. The in-school ideas that most resonated were those that challenged traditional hierarchies with questions or new approaches, allowed the students to be co-creators of their own educational journey, and offered clear channels for both representation and feedback to decision makers. Any school activity, from class to drama to basketball, is an important environment for experimentation, where students can practice voicing their opinions and taking on responsibility.

Some examples that were generated through this project that were validated by youth include:

STUDENTS PICK THE CURRICULUM
Every 3 weeks, students get to nominate topics they care about and then vote on what gets covered in class (i.e. occupy wall street, gun control, POC-led movements, etc).

STUDENT GOVERNMENT REIMAGINED Elementary, middle and high schools have a Congress and a President, which represents the student body and their needs to the school board and local government officials.

DAILY SURVEY A digital, daily 1 question survey sent to all the students in the high school that also served as an anonymous suggestion box, where students can anonymously speak up

THE **INSIGHTS MOST RELEVANT** FOR THE IN SCHOOL SETTING ARE:

- APPLIED VALUES
- CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION
- FUTURE PLANNING

THE **DESIGN PRINCIPLES** MOST REVELANT FOR THE SCHOOL SETTING ARE:

- YOUTH-CENTERED
- GROUNDED IN CONTEXT
- EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTIVE

WHO'S DOING IT WELL?[7]

YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH is a specific kind of youth-led research that involves engaging with community members and local research found in articles to learn more about a problem from those who are connected to it, in order to figure out how to address it. Easily integratable into diverse curricula, YPAR allows schools and the communities in which they exist to benefit from the expertise of young people and to support young people's sense of agency and efficacy. It is an especially powerful process for students facing oppression and marginalization.[8]

ACTION CIVICS is a student-centered, experiential practice in which young people learn about the political process by taking action on specific issues in their communities. In Action Civics, students typically follow a process of community examination, issue identification, research, strategizing, taking action, and reflection. Like a science lab for science classes, Action Civics is like a laboratory for social science. Action Civics equips students from underserved communities with the tools to participate politically by rooting the learning experience in students' lived experiences and bringing awareness to the historical patterns of disenfranchisement.

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7   These practices and organization were chosen based on a secondary investigation into evaluation of their outcomes
8   YPAR Hub. (2019). Learn about YPAR.

USING THIS TOOLKIT... IN THE COMMUNITY

FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES, EMPLOYERS, LIBRARIES, PARENTS, COACHES, AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS, ETC

Community engagement plays a key role in a young person's civic development. The young people we spoke with often cited their parents as incomplete drivers of their own civic identity and development — either because they did not discuss political material with them, or because they wanted to form their own opinions outside of a parental sphere of influence. Many of the young people's schools fail to cultivate the civic skills and values that lead to action; even those with exceptional civic training in school noted that the influence of school alone was incomplete. The young people who had strong community relationships cited experiences in these forums as a key source of pride, sense of self, and expression. The manifestation of community engagement was varied, but powerful. Their notion of community is as highly varied — from my town, to my high school, to broader identity groups, like the LGBTQ community or "the arts."

While the community is a critical pillar of development outside the home and school, it is also the least well defined, and therefore the trickiest engagement to cultivate. The decision makers, infrastructure, and boundaries of communities all vary significantly. As such, not all students find themselves engaged in their communities. For those who do, they have often been introduced to the opportunity by supportive adults in their lives such as teachers. For the young people we spoke with, a community identity or a sense of pride in their community spurred a sense of duty and action around that community.

"I only had to do 32 hours of community service here to graduate, but once I started I didn't want to stop. It's like a second home to me, and now I have over 100 hours."

"I just joined this club at school to have it on my college applications, but then I learned what a food bank is that there are actually people in my neighborhood who can't afford to eat, so now it's important to me to keep collecting them."

"When Trump got elected, it changed me. All these hateful supporters emerged — it really riles me up and I definitely care now... But I guess I haven't really done anything about it. I'm not sure what to do, and I don't have anyone to do it with."

IMAGE: Volunteer Judge Yvette Hollingsworth-Clark at California Civics Day Fall 2017

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Young people are hesitant to seek out community engagement opportunities, but are quick to realize the benefits. The community ideas that most resonated were those that provided an on-ramp and made it easy to try something new by including their friends, offering a tangible benefit, or happening close to home. The following ideas are tactical, and able to be executed in a programmatic way, by either a community organization or a civic institute.

Some examples that were generated through this project that were validated by youth include:
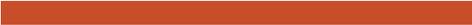
PAY WITH TIME Students are able to use their community service hours to "pay" for things with participating local businesses (i.e. 3 hours of volunteering = 3 hours of bike rental, or 5 hours = sandwich)
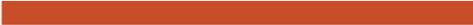
FUTURE MAPPING Work with an adult you admire who has a job or role in your community to understand the paths to get there, and what resources you'll need and where you can find them.
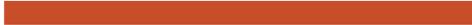
PARK DAYS One Saturday a month there is a field day in your local park attended by decision makers with rotating causes (i.e. voter registration, community safety, etc)

THE **INSIGHTS MOST RELEVANT** FOR THE COMMUNITY ARE:

- APPLIED VALUES
- CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION
- IMPACT AMBITION

THE **DESIGN PRINCIPLES** MOST REVELANT FOR THE COMMUNITY ARE:

- YOUTH-CENTERED
- ACTIVATING
- COURAGEOUSLY RESILIENT
- EMOTIONALLY SUPPORTIVE

WHO'S DOING IT WELL?[9]

PROJECT HIP-HOP (PHH, Highways Into the Past - History, Organizing and Power) is a youth-led cultural organizing group that links art and social justice. It works with young people from low-income communities of color across Boston. The program builds knowledge, fosters unity, catalyzes movement, and gives the feeling of being a home. Research into their program found that young people engaged in their program stay involved because "it has become a sort of home, and the people a sort of family. Some explained that this is because PHH offers a sense of psychological safety, allowing for freedom of expression and identity exploration."[10]

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES Building Healthy Communities is a 10 year community initiative in California to transform over a dozen communities across the state that have been devastated by health inequities. The framework used in this work recognizes that medical models are responsible for 30% of health outcomes while 70% comes from social, political, and economic environments. The approach considers the systems and policies that need to be changed to increase health equity and equips community members to address them through through civic engagement. They are developing Resident and Youth Power through education on how civic participation is key to changing policies, changing the narrative and norms around who matters in society, leveraging diverse community partnerships, and fostering collaborative efficacy for policy innovation, among other key drivers of change. [11]

9   These practices and organization were chosen based on a secondary investigation into evaluation of their outcomes
10 Kuttner, P.J. (2016). Hip-Hop Citizens: Arts-Based, Culturally Sustaining Civic Engagement Pedagogy. Harvard Educational Review: Winter 2016, 86 (4), 527-555
11 The California Endowment. (2019). Building Healthy Communities.

USING THIS TOOLKIT... IN POLITICAL SYSTEMS
FOR POLICYMAKERS, SCHOOL BOARDS, ETC

The young people we spoke to covered the spectrum of unengaged politically to highly engaged, which gave us a well-rounded view of their political impressions as well as their journeys along this spectrum. Nearly all of them were, or had once been, unengaged and skeptical of the "system" as something that could work for them and of their ability to impact it. Those who have become highly engaged can often pinpoint a moment that caused a drastic shift; usually this engagement journey pivoted around a moment of realizing the impact potential of young people, often by witnessing it firsthand either in themselves or relatable peers. Some examples of this were the student walkout for gun control, seeing a Youth City Council host an event, and Generation Citizen's Civics Day, a forum where students present their Action Civics projects to adults from the community. These experiences led them to internalize the agency and impact potential of young people, to believe that they belong in community and political conversations -- and ultimately, to see new abilities in themselves.

"Our principal was against us doing the walkout, but someone sent it around on Snapchat the night before and everyone ended up doing it. It was awesome."

"I like the Mobile City Hall idea. Would just be nice to know that [electeds] were actually seeing my neighborhood, but could I go up and talk to them? Would they listen to me or anyone my age?"

"I like the idea of an app as a way to communicate, both because it's easy, but also because it's anonymous — so they can't tell it's a teenager."

IMAGE: Rhode Island Civics Day Fall 2017

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Young people are and feel neglected by formal political structures -- and those from underserved communities even moreso. Current elected officials, from school board members to US Representatives to City Councilors, could and should do a better job of being accessible to young people, creating relevant channels for feedback, and including youth in formal processes and institutions. To support youth in overcoming some of the skepticism in the system and in their ability to impact it, policymakers can help link important social issues to political channels for change, highlight the instruments of power that young people, and all citizens, possess and how to use them, and create opportunities for young people to witness people like them — based on their age, race, gender, sexuality, geography, and beyond — voicing their opinions and enacting change. The ideas that most resonated with young people that can be implemented within, or to support political systems, were those that made it easy to participate by eliminating logistical challenges, meeting young people where they are, and offering anonymous channels for feedback.

Some examples that were generated through this project that were validated by youth include:

POLITICORPS: LEARN TO MAKE CHANGE
Get paid to spend your summer learning by doing community organizing. The cohort selects a cause to tackle.

WATCHDOG APP
Crowdsourced reporting for public accountability — report anything from a pothole to school funding needs. Community can upvote priority issues.

VOTING BUSES On election day, buses take students to the polling place to vote. Bus might contain non-partisan voting guides and voter registration forms (if same day).

MOBILE CITY HALL A city hall on wheels that spends 1 week in each neighborhood. Like a mobile library or ice cream truck. Hosts workshops, takes questions, etc.

THE **INSIGHTS MOST RELEVANT** FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM ARE:

- SOCIAL NOT POLITICAL
- VOTING NAVIGATION
- CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION

THE **DESIGN PRINCIPLES** MOST REVELANT FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM ARE:

- YOUTH-CENTERED
- ACTIVATING
- COURAGEOUSLY RESILIENT

WHO'S DOING IT WELL?[12]

HAMPTON VIRGINIA Over the past few decades, the city of Hampton, Virginia has institutionalized youth civic engagement across the city through the establishment of numerous youth civic bodies. The city has a Youth Commission of high school students appointed by the City Council as well as youth planners, a school superintendent's youth advisory group, and a principal's advisory group in each of the city's four public high schools which combined have demonstrated a culture shift that supports youth voice. These bodies do meaningful community work: for example, the youth commission and youth planners collaborated to propose and design a Teen Center that would hold youth-driven programming.[13]

12   These practices and organization were chosen based on a secondary investigation into evaluation of their outcomes
13   Sirianni, C. (2005). Youth Civic Engagement: Systems Change and Culture Change in Hampton, Virginia. CIRCLE Working Paper 31. CIRCLE.

APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

WHY DESIGN RESEARCH "Design research" is a inquiry approach rooted in the notion that solutions (including products, services, and policies) should be identifiably derived from the needs of the ultimate users or beneficiaries. Core tenants include empathy for and inclusion of the ultimate users of the solutions being designed. It is authentic, iterative and agile, with a toolkit of research methodologies from observation, journaling, and interviewing — and an emphasis on returning frequently to your "user" for guidance and feedback. The process and methodology of design thinking and design research originated in product development and engineering fields and their processes have been adopted by a variety of functions and industries.[14,15]

This approach was chosen for this project primarily because of its emphasis on inclusion and collaboration. That is, the process ensures both the participation and the input of the group of people that are the focus of the research. [16,17]

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH The nature and parameters of this project and methodology may have allowed biases and imperfections in the process. While we worked to mitigate these as much as possible, they are critical to name. First, our primary researchers were white women; they did not share many lived experiences with the youth participants, which may have lead to both a level of reticence from the young people as well as limited understanding for the interviewers. While they did have prior training and experience in a wide variety of environments, some undetected reservation from the participants is possible.

Secondly, the recruitment of the participants was resource-constrained, and therefore driven by pre-existing relationships with peer organizations and not by a full-service recruitment firm. This has the effect of keeping our sample limited to small groups of young people, many of whom already know each other. We mitigated this by doing two rounds of research in geographically diverse areas of the country to distribute the samples as much as possible. The research allowed us to pull out themes and insights that were consistent across the 29 young people from five geographic regions. Nonetheless, because of the nature of qualitative research there remain demographics and experiences that were not represented by the youth we spoke to.

Overall, these named limitations were mitigated by the research process itself including our repeated return to different young people as we proceeded with the research. As such, we believe that these issues do not preclude us from achieving our goals of identifying key insights to inform the development of youth from underserved communities as civic actors. This research is meant to initiate conversations, build upon existing efforts of inclusion, and encourage more experimentation and active input from and collaboration with young people from underserved communities.

14 https://www.ideo.org/approach
15 https://hbr.org/2018/09/why-design-thinking-works
16 Kuttner, P.J. (2016). Hip-Hop Citizens: Arts-Based, Culturally Sustaining Civic Engagement Pedagogy. Harvard Educational Review: Winter 2016, 86 (4), 527-555
17 This project was designed and conducted by Clare Seekins, a Generation Citizen Fellow and Dana Harris, Generation Citizen's Advocacy Director

APPENDIX: YOUTH PARTICIPANT COMMUNITIES

The 29 young people we engaged during the project duration went to the following high schools:

IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA:

SANTA FE SOUTH
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 760

- Hispanic   87%
- White   8%
- Black   4%
- Asian   1%

Economically disadvantaged*: 90%
US News & World Report

SOUTHEAST
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2017): 720

- Hispanic   66,7%
- White   13,2%
- Black   13,3%
- American Indian   4,2%
- Asian   1,3%
- Multi   1,3%

Economically disadvantaged*: 86%
Oklahoma City Public School (OKCPS)
Statistical Profile

IN MONTEVALLO AND WASHINGTON COUNTY, ALABAMA:

WASHINGTON CO
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 563

- White   72%
- Black   20%
- Hispanic   1%

Economically disadvantaged*: 56%
Remote & rural
US News & World Report

LEROY
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 652

- White   62%
- Black   26%
- American Indian   12%

Economically disadvantaged*: 56%
Remote & rural
US News & World Report

MONTEVALLO
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 407

- White   58%
- Black   24%
- Hispanic   14%
- Asian   13%
- Multi   1%

Economically disadvantaged*: 59%
US News & World Report

IN NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK:

REPERTORY COMPANY
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 251

- Hispanic   49%
- Black   37%
- White   8%
- Multi   4%
- Asian   2%

Economically disadvantaged*: 73%
US News & World Report

NORTHSIDE CHARTER
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2017): 401

- Hispanic   69%
- Black   21%
- White   6%
- Multi   2%
- Asian   2%

Economically disadvantaged*: 77%
Oklahoma City Public School (OKCPS)
Statistical Profile

IN THE LOWELL AND MALDEN, MASSACHUSETTS

LOWELL
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 251

- Hispanic   26%
- Black   12%
- White   28%
- Multi   4%
- Asian   30%

Economically disadvantaged*: 46%
Massachusetts Department of Education

MALDEN
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2017): 1845

- Hispanic   26%
- Black   22%
- White   25%
- Multi   23%
- Asian   3%

Economically disadvantaged*: 41%
Massachusetts Department of Education

IN DENVER, COLORADO

THORNTON
TOTAL ENROLLMENT (2016): 1729

- Hispanic   69%
- Black   4%
- White   25%
- Multi   1%
- Asian   5%
- American Indian / Alaskan Native 1%

Economically disadvantaged*: 41%
US News & World Report

*"Economically disadvantaged" is the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.

APPENDIX: VISIONING WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

In the second phase of the project, we hosted a half day Visioning Workshop to share our research with leaders of youth serving civic, organizing, and education organizations across fields, adapt the research based on their experiences, and collaborate on design principles and ideas for supporting the civic development of youth from underserved communities. It was conducted in New York City, NY with representatives from organizations headquartered in eight different states.

The 15 participants were from the following organizations:[18]

MAKE THE ROAD

NEW ERA COLORADO

DAVID MATHEWS CENTER FOR CIVIC LIFE

COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL)

SOUTHWEST ORGANIZING PROJECT

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FUND

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

BLACK SWAN ACADEMY

ICIVICS

MIKVA CHALLENGE

CALIFORNIANS FOR JUSTICE

CENTER FOR INFORMATION & RESEARCH ON CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT (CIRCLE)

YOUTH ON BOARD

STATEMENT ARTS

GENERATION CITIZEN, NYC

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18   Generation Citizen is grateful for the participation and incredible contributions of the representatives of these 15 organizations who joined for our Workshop and gave input and feedback on the project and its outputs

THANK YOU | Join us at **generationcitizen.org**