



CLOSING THE (VOTING) GAP

ONE DISTRICT'S APPROACH TO FOSTERING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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WHITNEY OAKLEY, ED.D. | SUPERINTENDENT



DEMOCRACY

cannot be undone by a
global pandemic, politics or

FEAR.

- Sharon L. Contreras



Civic Education

What It Generally Looks Like

- Only nine states and the District of Columbia require one year of U.S. government or civics.
- Thirty-one states only require a half-year of civics or U.S. government education, and 10 states have no civics requirement.
- Focused on cognitive skills and concrete knowledge
- Limited experiential learning or local problem-solving components

What Research Tells Us

- Young people are interested in politics and voting, but there's a “follow-through” gap
 - 70% of individuals under 24 who can vote don't
 - 20% who are eligible to register to vote don't
- 18–29-year-olds account for 22% of the voting population, but only 13% vote
- 28% age gap in presidential elections, 37% age gap in midterm elections, and up to 50% age gap in local elections.
- Age-based gaps in voter turnout bias public policy to favor older voters' preferences

Youth Activism

The percentage of young people, ages 18-24, who said they had taken each action in our 2016, 2018, and 2020 pre-election polls.

2016 2018 2020

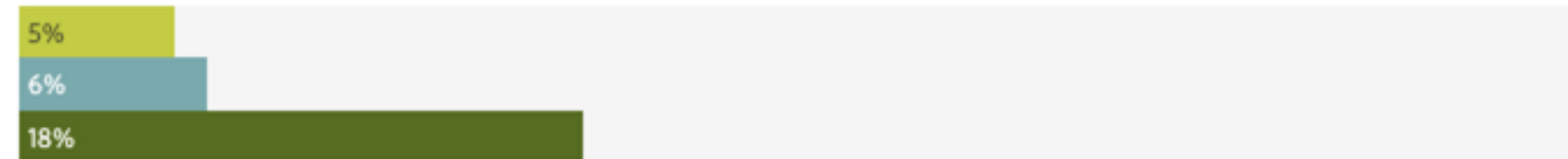
Attended a march or demonstration



Donated money to a campaign



Volunteered for a political campaign



CIRCLE Tufts University Tisch College - CIRCLE

Source: CIRCLE/Tisch College 2020 Pre-Election Youth Poll

[Get the data](#)

The Problem

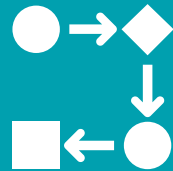
The Follow-Through Gap

- Follow-through requires
 - **knowledge:** how to register, where to vote, how to vote, rules around voting
 - **noncognitive skills** - grit, with-it-ness, delayed gratification, value of action
- Voting doesn't occur in a vacuum.
 - Policy
 - Structure
 - Practice

Three Barriers Young Voters Face

Research indicates that people of color and those living with poverty are disproportionately impacted by obstacles and barriers to voting.

PROCESSES



Registering to vote, where to find information, and what the actual voting experience looks like

PLACES



Locating their polling sites, getting to their polling sites, and understanding how date impacts location

PRACTICALITY



Having the time and the ability to actually get to polling sites when their days are accounted for

Where Education Comes In



**Our
Mission**



**Core
Values**



**State
Statutes**



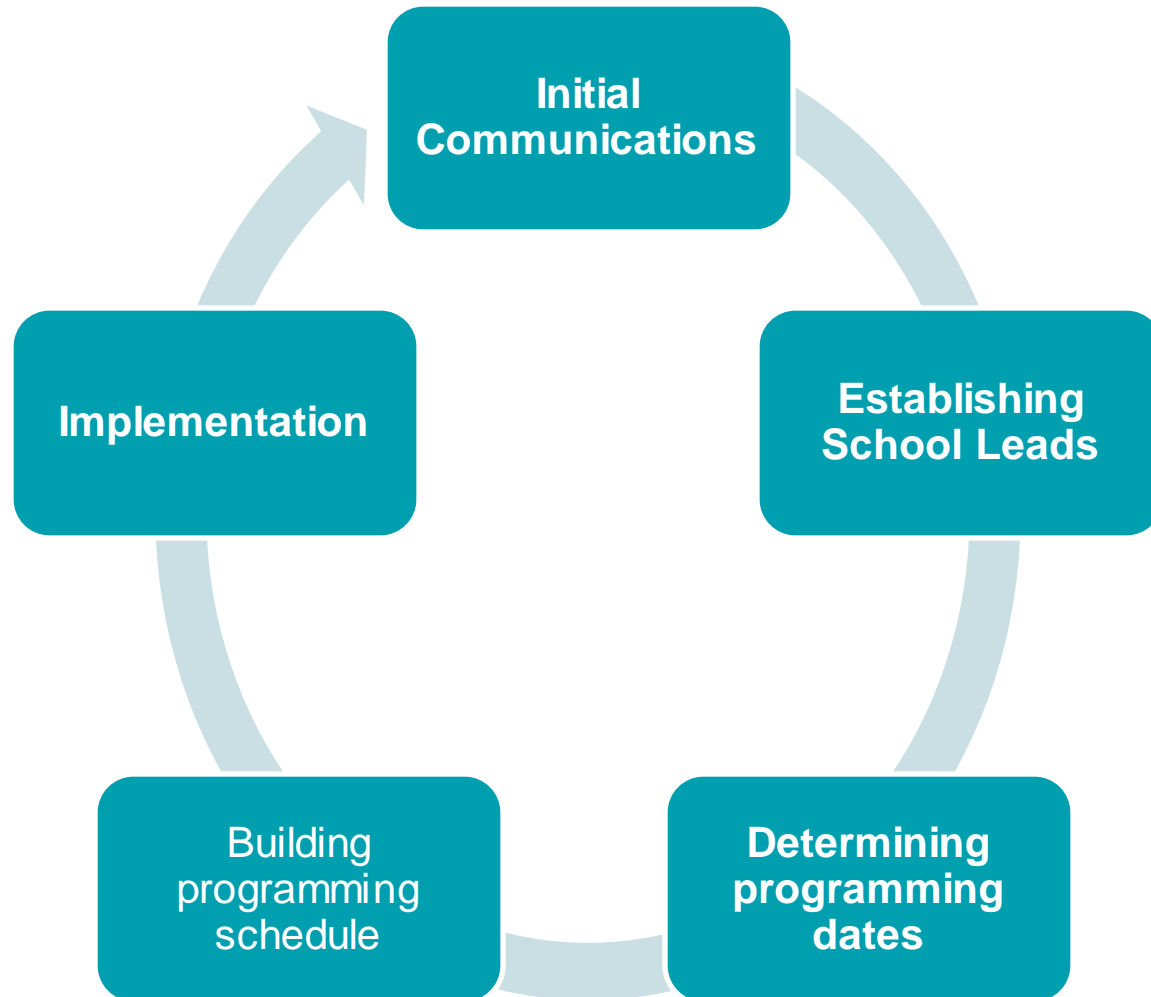
**Standard
Course of
Study**

Where Education Comes In

How We Can Help

- Focus on practical skills and knowledge
- Be thoughtful on timing
 - Classroom instruction on voter registration
 - Instructional time to engage in elections and election information
- Explicitly explain voter registration and the voting process, and support it

GCS Early Votes Program



Key Communicators

- Social Studies Director
- Community partners (You Can Vote)

Key Players

- School Admin
- School-based Project Lead
- You Can Vote Guilford Coordinator

By the Numbers

	Total Eligible by DOB	Total Registered	Percent
2020 Primaries	6,980	4,258	59.68%
2022 Primaries	7,039	3,693	52.5%

In 2020, GCS had just around 1000 students take advantage of early voting.

In 2022, GCS had 1,510 students completed voter registration forms during voter registration and education programming. 541 students took advantage of early voting transportation.

What You Need to Be Successful

- Community partners
- Unbiased, nonpartisan messaging/consistency
- School leads and support
- Early Voting
- Collaboration with Board of Elections
- Transportation
- Supportive, strong leadership

Next Steps

Where We're Headed

- Culminating Early Voting Field Trips each year
- High School
 - 10th Grade World and 11th Grade American History strands on civic engagement and civic action
 - 9th Grade Civic Literacy course with local government, civic action, and community engagement strands
- Middle grades civic literacy projects with specific strategies for engagement
- Elementary civic literacy units with foundational themes