



**2017 Civic Literacy Contest
Sponsored by the National Constitution Center**

**A proposal on behalf of Tacony Academy Charter High School
6201 Keystone Street Philadelphia, PA 19135
Teacher Author* Stephanie Felder
267-388-8656
sfelder@ap-schools.org**

**Authorizing Administrator *Naimah Holliday, Principal
267-388-8656
nholliday@ap-schools.org**

Grade levels impacted by project: 9-12

Name of the project: Enter to Learn, Exit to Serve: Exploring Civic Literacy Through Civic Engagement and Peer Leadership

Project Summary: The purpose of Tacony High School's Civic Literacy program is for students to acquire a firm understanding of how the Constitution was developed and how it impacts the way our government operates, and for students to learn how to develop a position, engage in civic dialogue, build constituencies and work towards a common goal by serving the school through a peer leadership program.

What contact(s) has your organization had with the National Constitution Center education staff regarding this project? Please leave blank if no previous contact was made:

Teacher Author Stephanie Felder, attended the Civic Literacy Contest workshop in April 2016 at the National Constitution Center; additionally, Tacony Academy submitted an application for the 2016 Civic Literacy Contest.

Contest Application

Background:

The mission of Tacony Academy Charter School is to enhance, support and promote creative and critical thinking as well as the problem solving skills of school-age learners in the making of original inventions as amazing solutions to puzzling problems while mastering Pennsylvania and national standards. We are a K-12 school that is housed in two locations in Northeast Philadelphia that operate semi-independently of each other. Each location has separate administrations. Our high school has approximately 400 students in grades 9-12.

Needs, Objectives and Outcomes:

We have found that our students have had limited opportunity to be engaged in meaningful civic duty; we would like to create a platform for our students to build capacity in that area. This will translate into students being more engaged civically in our school community through participation in existing programs such as Student Government, Mock Trial, Debate, and new programs such as Peer Mediation, Teen Court and Peer Leadership groups. In addition, students will gain greater awareness of the need for community engagement outside of school. This project will meet the following needs:

- Provide opportunities for students to have high quality instruction that engages our students in some of the “big ideas” in the Constitution and other founding documents.
- Provide opportunities for civic engagement at school and in the community.

Specific Outcomes:

- Students will have an in-depth understanding of the Constitution and other founding documents and be able to discuss/debate issues related to it.
- Students will be able to state the basic rights afforded to all people by the Constitution.
- Students will realize and respect the importance of community engagement in and out of school through civic related projects and experiences.
- Student peer leaders (12th graders) will help improve student relationships, emphasizing the meaning of teamwork and the transition of incoming 9th graders.
- Support and guidance from high school seniors will create an environment of trust which eases the pressures facing incoming students and increases their interest and involvement in the school community as a whole.

Target Population: The target population is the entire student body because students in all grades take Social Studies. There will be a focus on the incoming 9th graders (Class of 2021) and rising 12th graders (Class of 2018).

Benefits:

- The 9th grade class has the benefit of time; they will be able to spend four years engaging in the work of this project.
- The 9th grade class will be exposed to each phase of the project in its entirety.
- The 9th grade class will be able to gain extensive "real-world" experience from this project.
- 9th grade students receive the additional support by having a senior peer leader working with them on assigned civic literacy projects and visiting their social studies class once a week to work on assign projects together, participate in civic discussions, team building exercises, read related articles together, etc.
- 9th grade teachers participating in the program gain deeper understanding of their students as they observe the peer groups in action.
- 12th graders who are student peer leaders will gain confidence, leadership, organizational and team building skills that will benefit them now and throughout their careers and lives.
- Peer groups also provide an excellent forum for students to get to know their peers from widely different backgrounds.

Staffing Plan:

We will identify a Lead Teacher to manage the project from start to finish. The Lead Teacher will coordinate the implementation and maintenance of the program and collaborate with all content area teachers, specifically Social Studies, to create cross-curricular connections in lesson planning. We will also identify a Peer Leader Coordinator who will manage the implementation of the Student Peer Leader Program.

Enter to Learn, Exit to Serve: Exploring Civic Literacy through Civic Engagement and Peer Leadership will be a school-wide initiative. All stakeholders will be active participants in implementation, planning and progress monitoring.

Anticipated Length of the Project:

4 years (with the possibility of extending into a year 5)

Project Start Date: September 18, 2017

Project End Date : June 10, 2022

Additional Information:

In order to properly design and implement the Peer Leadership component of this project, we will use the 2017-2018 school year for initial planning and training of teachers and student leaders. However, most aspects of the instructional plan (specifically the use of the Interactive Constitution) will be implemented starting with the 2017- 2018 school year. The timing of this project is based on the need to have one group of students matriculate through the entire project. Therefore, students will start the project in ninth grade and continue through graduation.

Program Approach

Our program is structured via use of a scaffolding approach in which, beginning in 9th grade, students are introduced to constitutional concepts and democratic skills (aligned with PA Common Core) that will then continue to build on this framework and further develop these skills each year. Within this framework, each grade level has a different theme and focuses on particular parts of the Constitution that best fit the grade's required Social Studies curriculum. Each grade level will have specific activities that will also align with the identified theme, content, and a Capstone Project at the end of the year. For example, 10th grade students take US History 1 (Exploration of the New World to the Civil War); therefore, we have designated their project theme to be "Knowing Your Rights." Students will focus on analyzing Amendments 1-10 of the Constitution. Besides the work done in class utilizing the many resources available from the Constitution Center and the Interactive Constitution website, students will participate in a series of debates in and out of class which focus on current issues related to their theme, will organize a Bill of Rights Celebration for a Bill of Rights Day, and will participate in at least one trip to the Constitution Center each year. Each grade will have similar activities and content related to their designated theme.

Tacony Academy actively uses the Caring School Community model at all grade levels. In this model students regularly hold class meetings to discuss topics relevant to being a "good citizen" in our school community. To enhance and expand the use of this model, we plan to develop and implement a peer mediation program and a Student Court, in which students can exhibit what they are learning about citizenship within a democracy as practical applications of the program content.

Peer Leaders: The Lead Teacher, Peer Leader Coordinator, and teachers in the program will teach leadership skills to a group of twenty senior peer leaders in an accredited course that meets daily throughout the school year. Students interested in becoming peer leaders will apply and be chosen in the spring of their junior year. A selection committee composed of staff working in the program will select an equal number of male and female who represent the various segments of the student population. It is important that the group

includes students who demonstrate leadership potential but do not necessarily hold school leadership positions.

Peer groups (9th graders): At the start of the school year, peer leaders will begin working in male-female pairs with groups of 10 incoming freshmen, applying what they have learned in their social studies/leadership class. The 9th graders will meet weekly with the peer leaders in the regularly scheduled 9th grade social studies class to discuss constructive ways to deal with civic concerns and problems.

Impact of Instructional Materials on Student Body:

Tacony students are required to take four years of Social Studies coursework. This program will use the Social Studies classes as the main vehicle to reach students with civics content. The Interactive Constitution will be used to reinforce the themes of democracy within each grade level's coursework. The use of the Interactive Constitution will enable teachers to create and implement lessons that provide additional opportunities for higher order thinking like analyzing and synthesizing. This will enable students to use the knowledge they gain in various contexts.

Civics content and skills will also be incorporated into elective courses (Art, Music, African American History, Philosophy, Computer Technology) and activities outside of class (Debate Team, Student Court). The School Librarian will work with Social Studies teachers to teach and reinforce information literacy skills specific to civic engagement and civic literacy. All of these ensure that students have multiple exposures in various disciplines to civics content and skills.

The activities created for each grade level are designed to be engaging, interactive, and inclusive. For example, each grade level will go on a civics-related field trip each year, which have had high turnout rates in the past. 9th graders will go to the Constitution Center, 10th graders will go to the Constitution Center, 11th graders will go to City Hall and 12th graders go to Washington D.C. to explore the three branches of government and the impact of the media.

As part of their state-mandated senior project, seniors will be encouraged to gear their project toward a civics-related internship and create a related community service project that reflects their use of the Interactive Constitution, that also has real world relevance.

Monthly themes, academic competitions and contests are designed to motivate and engage students at different levels. Contests and competitions will require different skills: memorization, descriptive and persuasive abilities, creativity, volunteering, problem solving and critical thinking. This will help us to maximize a positive impact on our student body. Students who participate will be recognized. A monthly schedule of themes, contest and competitions will be developed.

Assessment:

In “Enter to Learn, Exit to Serve: Exploring Civic Literacy through Civic Engagement and Peer Leadership” program, assessment drives instruction. Pre-assessment, post assessment, and formative/summative assessments are regular parts of the teaching/learning cycle. At the beginning and end of each year, students will take a pre and post assessment. We will use data to guide instruction throughout the year.

At the beginning and end of each year, students will take a survey that assesses knowledge and understanding of civic content and concepts. In the middle of the year (depending upon organization of content), students will participate in a series of reflective pieces. Students will also use peer reviews and keep a digital portfolio of their work using Google Classroom.

We will track the number of students participating in the program. We will conduct exit interviews after program activities to ask students what they have learned and what interest them the most. The interview information will be closely tracked. We will use the data collected from Year One to adjust and improve the program in later years.

Instruction:

Students will use the ChromeBooks to access the Interactive Constitution in class. Students will also use the Interactive Constitution app to complete assignments at home. Based on grade level, students will study themes that relate to the content of the course they are in. Each grade level has a theme that corresponds to lessons that will be developed using the Interactive Constitution.

The 9th grade theme, “Responsible Citizens,” will compare and contrast the idea of being a citizen in various historical contexts. Students will analyze primary source documents including those from the Interactive Constitution. The theme “Responsible Citizens” will examine the Preamble and Article IV of the Constitution to give students an understanding of citizenship in this country. Because students in the 9th grade study World History, they will also analyze documents related to what they are learning such as Hammurabi's Code of Law, Traditional Chinese Law, Athenian Democracy and the Laws of Draco & Solon, Roman Republic and Roman Senate, Unwritten Constitution of the Roman Empire, Magna Carta, Petition of Rights and the English Bill of Rights. Students will compare and contrast these primary sources with the United States Constitution to fully understand the global concept of citizenship using the Interactive Constitutional Rights website.

Our 10th grade theme is “Knowing Your Rights” and the students will engage in an in-depth study of the Bill of Rights. Students will utilize the Interactive Constitution to research and analyze primary source documents. Students will explore each amendment in the Bill of Rights by reading and analyzing the “Common Interpretation” and the “Masters of Debate” articles contained within the Interactive Constitution.

The 11th grade theme is “The Struggle for Equality” Students in this grade will explore the “Reconstruction Amendments”, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, and the 19th Amendment and interpret the impact that these documents have had on our history while examining the impact they continue to have in today’s contexts.

The 12th grade theme is “Rights, Duties and Responsibilities of Preserving Democracy.” Students in this grade will study Article III of the Constitution and impact that it has on preserving democracy. They will conduct research and have required persuasive writing assignments that correspond to Common Interpretation and Masters of Debate articles. Based on their continued use of the Interactive Constitution, students in years three and year four of our program will have developed a full understanding of how the Interactive Constitution is structured and will be able to use it as a classroom resource on a daily basis and during classroom discussions/debates.

Our goal is for the Interactive Constitution to become an integral part of the learning process at Tacony Academy. Social Studies teachers will receive training on how to best utilize various resources for teaching content within their theme, drawing from their class content, and making relevant connections with current issues. High-quality instruction will also include teaching common-core aligned lessons that are both engaging and challenging. In order to do this effectively and consistently, Social Studies teachers will have dedicated planning time each week to review lessons and strategize improvements.

Additional Educational Experiences:

Community Service is in an integral part of our instructional program at Tacony Academy. Every scholar is required to complete 20 hours of community service each year. The opportunity to align community service with instructional outcomes using their understanding of the Constitution is phenomenal. Community Service will involve experiences and activities such as having our scholars utilize the developed relationship with Republican State Representative Martina White and Democrat State Senator John Sabatina. We will utilize class meetings and other discussion protocols to analyze the use of the Constitution in 21st century government. In addition, our partnership with the Wisconsin Civic Association, Councilman Bobby Henon and MARC (Major Artillery Revitalization Committee) will allow scholars to demonstrate their understanding of civic engagement through opportunities with local Recreational Center Cleanup Days, the Mayfair Fallen Heroes Run, the Vietnam Veterans Frankford Avenue Organization, and the Thanksgiving Day Parade. These all support the civic responsibility set forth by our founding fathers in the Constitutional documents.

Other educational experiences will include reflective writing assignments and journaling, assemblies led by a series of guest speakers and local community leaders, Capstone Projects in all Social Studies classes, writing letters to civic leaders to promote change, research projects, student surveys and oratorical contests.

Documented Impact on Student Understanding: The majority of this program will be incorporated into students' social studies and elective classes, thus, much of their learning will be documented through formative and summative assessments . However, there will also be methods used to document student growth, understanding of concepts, and skill acquisition. Students will be given both pre- and post-survey each year, which will help measure what students have learned that year about the designated topics. Analyzing these surveys will help us to understand what students are learning and what activities are supporting that learning the most. To strengthen the latter part of this analysis, students will also participate in reflective writing throughout the year, particularly after a theme-oriented activity or event (ex: a debate or Bill of Rights Day celebration). Students in each grade will also complete a capstone project, which will focus on assessing the democratic skills students have learned and their ability to apply and synthesize Constitutional knowledge. Our tentative schedule of events for students to display their knowledge include, a Constitution Day Celebration which includes our Student Government Election, Black History Month and Women's History Month Oratorical Contests, Skits written and performed by Tacony scholars, Bill of Rights Parents Night and a Student Constitution Competition.

Professional Development: Professional development is an integral part of the culture at Tacony Academy Charter School; we have professional development built into our weekly schedule every Friday from 2:00pm - 4:00pm. The strategies that will be used to implement this professional development plan will also include summer professional development sessions, turn-around trainings, small group trainings, and whole staff trainings. The mission of Tacony's professional development program is to transform our school into professional learning communities that will ensure high quality education, exemplary teaching and distinguished leadership for every student.

We anticipate partnering with the following organizations: local colleges, National Constitution Center Education Department and community based organizations.

The Peer Leader Coordinator and teachers working in the program will be trained during the summer. The first four day workshop will be held in August. Follow up workshops will be spread across the school year, with the second four day workshop occurring in the spring in preparation for the second year of the program. An important part of faculty training is learning how to continue the program independently after direct training ceases, including how to pass on methods, skills, and philosophy to colleagues.

Teachers will need professional development for technology use, and these trainings will be conducted by Intelligent Networks. Training for Social Studies teachers on engaging

learners will be presented by the curriculum staff at American Paradigm Schools, Tacony's nonprofit education management organization.

Specific Professional Development Activities:

How to Effectively Use the Interactive Constitution: Conducted by Constitution Center Staff

Integrating Primary Sources into Learning: Conducted by Constitution Center Staff

How to Write Effective Document Based Questions: Conducted by American Paradigm Schools Curriculum Office

How to Effectively Use the Interactive Smartboard in the Classroom: Conducted by Intelligent Networks

Creating Class Websites and Podcasts: Conducted by Tacony Academy Administration and Staff Members

Participating teachers will also be given a one time stipend to be used for professional development related to the study of the Constitution. Examples of such activities would be participation in National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes (if available) or relevant college courses. Participation must be verified and funds would then be reimbursed. Teachers who receive funds will also conduct "turnaround" trainings for the entire staff.

Local college professors and scholars and Constitutional Law scholars, will provide additional professional development during each school year. We will work with the National Constitution Center's education department to identify and work with Scholars specializing in Citizenship, the Bill of Rights, Equality, and Preserving Democracy.

Sustainability:

Civics Class - The curriculum and material resources, once revised and/or completed, will be available to teachers and for other schools.

Peer Leadership Class - Students receive three Carnegie credits and the course will serve as an elective. Curriculum and material resources will be available to teachers and other schools. Once faculty is trained, turnaround training will be implemented in year 2, 3, and 4.

Community Service/Volunteering- Students will be required to complete 10 of the 20 hours in a setting that requires him or her to apply the concepts learned using the

Interactive Constitution to the service activity. Suggested activities include but are not limited to, creating a voter registration drive, volunteering at the polls on election day, and internships with local government officials and judges. The purpose of the new requirement is to expose students to real world experiences that will further increase their understanding and assist them in fulfilling their civic responsibility set forth by our founding fathers in the Constitution.

Student Peer Leaders- Students with leadership capabilities will be encouraged to apply for admission to the program. Interested students will apply in the spring of their junior year. The leadership skills they learn through this program can be applied in other settings and later in their lives as well.

Budget:

Unless otherwise stipulated, this budget represents costs per year to sustain the goals of the Civic Literacy program.

Description	Annual Cost	Total over 4 Years
Stipends		
Lead Teacher	2000	8000
Peer Leader Coordinator	2000	8000
After School and Summer Program Planning	3000	12000
Subtotal	7000	28000
Professional Development for Teachers		
Workshops each year presented by other vendors or speakers	1000	4000
Workshops each year presented by American Paradigm Schools	0	0
Workshops each year presented by National Constitution Center staff	0	0
Subtotal	1000	4000
Lectures for Teachers and/or Students		
Guest speakers from a local college or community organization per year	1500	6000

Field Trips

9th Grade Constitution Center

100 students @ \$14 each	1400	5600
3 busses @ \$200 each	600	2400
Subtotal	2000	8000

10th Grade Constitution Center

100 students @ \$14 each	1400	5600
3 busses @ \$200 each	600	2400
Subtotal	2000	8000

11th Grade City Hall Tour and visit with City Council Members

100 students @\$8 each	800	3200
3 busses @ \$200 each	600	2400
Subtotal	1400	5600

12th Grade Washington DC Trip

Tour of Supreme Court	0	0
Tour of US Capitol Building	0	0
Newseum 100 students @ \$11.50 each	1150	4600
3 busses @ \$1500 each	4500	18000
Subtotal	5650	22600
Supplemental Materials and Contest Prizes	1150	4600

Technology

30 Chrome Books, Cart, and Licenses (1-time purchase)	12000	12,000
Replacement Chromebooks, 1 per year	300	1200
Subtotal	12300	13,200

TOTAL **100,000**