2016 Civic Literacy Contest – Constitution High School

School: The Constitution High School  
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Grade level impacted by project: High School 9-12

Name of Project: Creating Engaged Citizen Scholars Through Civic Literacy

Sentence Summary of project: Our goal is to develop an interdisciplinary Civics Literacy curriculum that utilizes the National Constitution Center's Interactive Constitution and an Inquiry based approach to learning in order to develop the skills necessary for our students to become 21st century engaged citizen scholars.

Contact with National Constitution Center Staff: Attended the April 8th workshop at the National Constitution Center, Participated in a teleconference with NCC staff on June 28th.

School Background and Mission: Founded in 2006, Constitution High School is a unique, small, college preparatory, city-wide admission school in the Philadelphia Public School District. Our school focuses on three tenets: knowledge of history, democratic deliberation, and active citizenship. It is our goal to use the Civic Literacy Contest to develop an interdisciplinary curriculum utilizing these three tenets in a more integrated and direct approach through instruction in all classes. Currently, the school’s history classes use the tenets and the historical resources of the city of Philadelphia to deliver an enriched educational experience for our students. The Civic Literacy Contest will allow us to create a program that capitalizes on our tenets and the unique resources of our location to integrate Civic Literacy across all content areas. By engaging students with an appreciation for history and an understanding of the democratic principles embodied in the United States Constitution, this college preparatory high school will develop the next generation of engaged citizen scholars and civic leaders in government, public policy, and law.

Specific Needs: In recent years, Constitution High School has gone through a major transitional period. In the 2016 - 2017 school year we will have a new principal. In the past two years, we have hired new teachers in Math, Social Studies, English, and Special Education. These changes provide our school with a unique opportunity to reinvigorate and refocus our dedication to our school’s three tenets by utilizing the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution to create the interdisciplinary Civics Literacy curriculum. Additionally, data analysis of student performance on state mandated testing and Advanced Placement courses shows that our students need to improve their skills in Math, Science, History and English. Our students need greater access to technology, development of reading, writing, and investigation skills to help improve their performance in all content areas. It is our goal to that an integrated approach to learning across all content areas will improve our students’ performance on state mandated tests and Advanced Placement exams, but most importantly develop all students into engaged citizen scholars who are experts on the Constitution and understand the role it plays in all aspects of our society.
Outcomes Expected to Achieve with Project:

1. All Constitution High students will graduate with:
   a. Advanced skills in project based learning.
   b. Pride in the Constitution Connections they have made throughout their four years of study.
   c. Skills, experience, and mindset to fully participate as informed and engaged citizens.
   d. Skills of academic discourse, analysis, collaboration, communication problem solving, curiosity and critical thinking needed for 21st century college and career readiness.

2. Students’ scores on state mandated testing and AP exams will improve.

3. Our teachers will utilize the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution to create an interdisciplinary curriculum that focuses on civics education and the U.S. Constitution.

4. Our school’s culture will be more intentionally focused on our three tenets of Knowledge of History, Democratic Deliberation, and Active Citizenship.

5. Our teachers will create a student centered, problem based approach to inquiry students that follows the College, Career and Civic (C3) Framework.

6. Our students and teachers will showcase their work at the end of the year symposium: The Constitution High Convention.

The target population that you plan to serve and how this population will benefit from the project:
Our student population is predominantly minority with 71% African American, 14% Latino, 7% White, 5% Asian and 3% other. Additionally, 99% of students qualify for free lunch and are considered economically disadvantaged. This population will benefit from this project with increased support for learning through the creation of a school-wide curriculum, support for funding of field trips, support for funding of technology, and support for extended learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

Proposed staffing plan, both external and internal team members to fulfill the project

Internal Team Members
Project Lead - Carl Ackerman
History Curriculum - Francine Gold, Aisha Madhi
Humanities Curriculum - Miranda Thompson
Science Curriculum - Janel Flanagan
Math Curriculum - Robert Signs, Viktoriya D'Agostino
Literature Curriculum - Annabelle Lyons, Neal Follman, Robert Ballew, Jesse Todd

External Team Members
Steve Schwartz and Ron Nash - Gilder Lehrman Institute
Dr. Donna Sharer - Office of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs, School District of Philadelphia
Curriculum Development Specialist
Kerry Sautner - Education Director, National Constitution Center
Honorable Judge Rendell - Third Circuit Court of Appeals
Mary Gay Scanlon - Ballard Spahr Law Firm

Project Start Date 09-01-2016
Project End Date 06-25-2020
Any additional information you want us to know about the timing of your project:

It is our goal to expand the project over the course of four years and in the last year have a self-sustaining program.

1. Program Approach
Constitution High school will use grant funds to create an interdisciplinary curriculum that focuses on the following Big Ideas and Inquiry Questions related to civics education and the U.S. Constitution.

A. At Constitution High School, all students are citizen scholars.
B. The overarching tenets of our school community are Knowledge of History, Democratic Deliberation, and Active Citizenship. Each grade level will also focus on a specific topic and examine it through the lenses of Knowledge of History, Democratic Deliberation, and Active Citizenship.

a. Freshmen Year: Citizenship – What are the fundamental Rights and Responsibilities of citizens? In our school? In our city? In our country? In the world? (Bill of Rights Project)
What does it mean to be a citizen? What does it mean to be a scholar? What does it mean to be a citizen of a professional community or discipline? In what ways are students scholars? In History? In Literature? In Mathematics? In Science?

b. Sophomore Year: Identity – What defines a government as a Democracy, Republic, or Dictatorship? How did the Constitution redefine the identity of citizens and understandings of fundamental rights in our society? What role does the Constitution play in the identity of our government? What role has the Constitution played in the quest for expanded individual and group rights? How does the Constitution create and constrain government to protect our fundamental rights? How does this relate to the tension in the lives of students and scholars and in the subjects that they study? How do we balance the tension between the freedom to create, explore, and experiment and the need to set constraints or limits to allow scholars and students to grow? How have students developed into scholars? (Harkness Discussions)

c. Junior Year: Empowerment – How does the Constitution both empower and limit government? How does the Constitution empower government, communities, and individuals to innovate in areas of Math, Science, and Literature? How can we empower students to be engaged citizens and scholars in our school? City? Country? World? In what ways do scholars shape and grow their disciplines? How are scholars empowered to change their disciplines and thus change the world?

d. Senior Year: Service How does the Constitution create opportunities for civic engagement? How can the Constitution prepare students to go out into the world and serve as productive citizens and leaders in their communities? In what ways do scholars serve their discipline? In what ways do scholars serve their communities? How can students use their scholarship to be active citizens in the pursuit of the ideals of the Preamble to the Constitution? How can students use individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning?

C. Create an Interdisciplinary Approach to Civics Education (Project Based Learning through Inquiry)
The Core Skills developed in all classes around the Big Ideas and Inquiry Questions are based on the belief that all students are scholars and on our focus on the core tenets of Knowledge of History, Democratic Deliberation, and Active Citizenship.
a. **Knowledge of History** - Students will conduct research across curriculum areas to understand the historical context of topics in Mathematics, Science, Literature, and Civics. (ie. In Geometry students will study the principles of the Golden Ratio and make connections to the architecture of The Second National Bank, The White House, and Independence Hall.)

b. **Democratic Deliberation** - Using a student centered, problem based approach to inquiry students will follow the College, Career and Civic (C3) Framework.

   i. *Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries* – Students will learn how to develop inquiry questions on each Big Idea to explore in all subject areas. For example, in the Freshmen year students will examine the Big Idea of **citizenship** throughout all their courses of study. In Science, students will examine what it means to be a citizen of the world in Physical Science by researching the issue of climate change. In Math, students will examine what it means to be a citizen of the country by analyzing the demographics of different regions of the US and creating visual representations of the data and their analysis. In Literature, students will examine what it means to be a citizen of Philadelphia by reading and analyzing poetry, journal writings, and lyrics of Philadelphian artists.

   ii. *Dimension 2: Connections to Disciplinary Tools and Concepts* – Teachers will identify the key content in their subject that connect to the big ideas for each grade level. The C3 Framework core disciplines of Civics, History, Geography, and Economics will serve as a model for teachers in all subject areas. In Math, Science, and Literature teachers will identify the core disciplines for their subjects and look for connections with the C3 Framework.

   iii. *Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence (research & collaboration)* - Students will conduct authentic research through data collection, primary source and secondary source analysis, archive / museum visits, guest expert lectures, oral history interviews, and other opportunities to discover answers to their inquiry questions. Through collaboration. Students will work with partners, in small groups, with experts from the community (ie. parents, neighbors, professors, museum staff, archival staff, etc..), and with teachers across the disciplines to develop inquiry questions, conduct research, and create presentations.

c. **Active Citizenship**

   iv. *Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action* through presentation and reflection. Students will develop presentation skills through participation in small groups, whole class, school-wide, and community-wide venues. Teachers will use a common deliberation format for students to debate and discuss their questions, research, evidence and ideas. Also, a common rubric for assessing students’ presentations will be used throughout the school. Finally, a culminating event each year will be a symposium open to the community based on each year’s theme closely connected to the National History Day theme for that year. Students will reflect on their learning throughout all classes in a structured way to celebrate accomplishments and learn how to grow from mistakes, setbacks, and failures. Reflection will be a central part of each phase of project development and culminate in the final session at the symposium.

D. Create instructional materials that highlight the connections between the Constitution and students’ lives

   a. In History classes, students will explore inquiry questions on the Constitution related to each year’s theme. In History classes, students will be asked to identify **Constitution Connections** with Math, Science, and Literature classes. This will allow students to clearly / explicitly see the cross
curricular connections. The Constitution Connections will be completed in History classes and posted on bulletin boards and electronic throughout the school on a regular basis.

b. Across all classes, teachers will create lessons around the Big Idea for each year and reference the Constitution Connections in their classes as well. This will reinforce students’ understanding of the content and provide an intentional school-wide focus and shared mission. Students will also acquire an expanded, cross-curricular academic vocabulary and disciplinary vocabulary enabling them to more fully participate in academic oral and written discourse.

c. Field Trips – each grade level will participate in a field trip focused on the Big Idea and Constitution Connections. The trip will include a visit to a historic site and a museum with a focus on Science / Math. Students will have to make Constitution Connections at each site.

d. The symposium will feature a segment on the Constitution Connections that students made throughout the school year.

2. Impact of Instructional Materials on Student Body.

The instructional materials will be designed using a common structure for Project Based Learning modelled after the C3 Framework: Inquiry, Research, Collaboration, Presentation, Reflection and Action. This structure will be implemented in a unit of study focused on each grade level’s Big Idea across the content areas of Math, Science, Literature, and History. This common structure will be utilized in each grade level as this project advances. By year 4, the school-wide structure will be implemented in a unit of study for all grade levels and impact all students at our school.

Additionally, a common school-wide rubric for presentation assessment and a common format for deliberation will be developed.

3. Assessment.

Reflection and a combination of content assessment and self-assessment will be instrumental in assessing what students have learned and how they have applied that knowledge. A school-wide reflection format will be created and implemented by students and teachers in which they assess the progress of their projects at three different stages (Beginning, Middle, End). These reflections will include a numerical self-evaluation (ie. on a Likert scale from 1-10 I feel confident about this project) that will be used to create visual analysis of students’ progress. Additionally, there will be questions about Constitution Connections in which students and staff can demonstrate their content knowledge and learning. This reflection will be completed on a computer format such as Google docs so that students and staff can easily access the data and see how others think.

Additionally, through a common school-wide rubric for presentation and common format for deliberation created by teachers and students across the academic disciplines of Math, Science, Literature, and History, there will be a common language and understanding of how students will demonstrate growth. Students will also conduct self-assessments and provide peer reviews during the development of their projects. Students will create an electronic portfolio of their work to illustrate their growth. The portfolio will require that students demonstrate a learning curve based on the work they’ve completed in class.

4. Instruction.

Utilizing the C3 Framework, Project Based Learning, and Inquiry, teachers and students will collaborate to create inquiry units around each grade level’s Big Idea. The Interactive Constitution will be introduced through lessons in History classes and referenced or utilized in all classes during the research phase of project development.
Teachers across the curriculum will work together to develop lessons on the Constitution Connections of the Big Idea for each grade level in each subject.

Utilizing the concept of teaching for understanding and the 3C model, students will present their inquiry and research in a culminating performance of understanding. Students will present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature varied perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

The end of the year symposium (The Constitution High Convention) will focus on the themes of the Constitution Connections and Constitutional Conversations developed in classes throughout the year. The Constitution symposium will include opportunities for students and teachers to share lessons and projects created in their classes with other students groups, fellow educators, scholars and the general public. This event has been envisioned as a conference for civics that will showcase our model of civics education, while providing an opportunity for engagement and discourse around the theme of citizenship. Guests from the legal community (law enforcement and attorneys) will participate in democratic deliberation to discuss contemporary implications of the Constitution. The Constitution High Convention will be a showcase for student projects that includes performances, National History Day projects, Science Fair projects and Senior Projects. It will also be a showcase for teachers to demonstrate and share lessons that reflect best practices in teaching.

5. **Documented Impact on Student Understanding.**

As described in the section above on assessment, documentation of the impact on student understanding will be created through Google Form Reflections, student reflections written or recorded (ie. confessional video) for projects, and participation in The Constitution High Convention.

6. **Professional Development.**

Teachers at Constitution High will participate in professional development on the C3 Framework to understand what it is, how it works, and ways we can incorporate it across the curriculum.

Professional Development of teachers will be enhanced by constitutional scholars presentations on the grade-level themes and their Constitution Connections and Conversations. Constitution High School teachers will share their best practices during in-school development days and be encouraged to present in other forums. Additionally, teachers will be selected to share best practices at the Constitution High Convention. A possible title for the event is *Con-Con* or *ConstitutionCon*: A Forum and Showcase for students, teachers, and the community focused on Knowledge of History, Democratic Deliberation, and Active Citizenship.

Constitution High School teachers will visit other schools with similar models such as The Science Leadership Academy, The Workshop School, Bodine High School for International Affairs, and the International High Schools in NYC which are designed for immigrant students but have an embedded project based model that is highly scaffolded / differentiated.

Teachers will be offered opportunities to attend professional development models such as Ed Camp ([http://www.edcamp.org/](http://www.edcamp.org/)) and Problem Based Learning workshops to learn about the best practices and how to create teacher-led professional development.
Teachers will participate in a Professional Development with Dr. Kathy Swan, Associate Professor of Social Studies at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Swan is the project Director/Lead Writer of the C3 Framework. She has created webinars for teachers: [http://www.c3teachers.org/professional-development/](http://www.c3teachers.org/professional-development/)

7. **Sustainability**
The program will develop over 4 years as each grade-level theme is developed and featured at Con-Con. By year 4, all grade-level themes will include cross-curricular units of study rooted in project based learning and inquiry. At this point, the program will be well established and the Big Ideas and instructional tools will be ingrained in teaching and learning.

8. **Budget**  $100,000 over the course of 4 years

   **Year 1** - $25,000
   - $10,000 professional development and curriculum development (C3 Framework session with Kathy Swan and teacher creation of common rubric, deliberation process, research, assessment, and lessons for units of study utilizing the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution.)
   - $3,000 field trip for 9th grade field trip on focused on theme of citizenship
   - $7,000 Technology - new laptops / replacement laptops to provide students with access to Interactive Constitution, Google forms for Reflection assessments, and other digital resources.
   - $5,000 **Constitution High Convention** symposium – there will be initial costs to host this event but by year 4 the goal is that it will be self-sustaining.

   **Year 2** - $25,000
   - $7,000 professional development and curriculum development (Gilder Lehrman Teaching Literacy through History Professional Development and teacher creation of new lessons units of study utilizing the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution)
   - $5,000 field trips for 9th grade focused on citizenship and 10th grade focused on identity.
   - $7,000 Technology - new laptops / replacement laptops to provide students with access to Interactive Constitution, Google forms for Reflection assessments, and other digital resources.
   - $1,000 materials for the creation of student projects for National History Day, Science and Math Competitions, and the Constitution High Convention.
   - $5,000 **Constitution High Convention** - $2,500 for marketing event to teachers, students, and the public and $2,500 for set-up costs.

   **Year 3** - $25,000
   - $5,000 professional development and curriculum development  (Professional Development and teacher creation of new lessons units of study utilizing the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution)
   - $7,500 field trips for 9th grade focused on citizenship, 10th grade focused on identity, 11th grade focused on empowerment.
   - $5,000 Technology - new laptops / replacement laptops to provide students with access to Interactive Constitution, Google forms for Reflection assessments, and other digital resources.
   - $5,000 **Constitution High Convention** - $2,500 for marketing event to teachers, students, and the public and $2,500 for set-up costs.

   **Year 4** - $25,000
- $3,000 professional development and curriculum development (Professional Development and teacher creation of new lessons units of study utilizing the National Constitution Center’s Interactive Constitution)
- $9,000 field trips for 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students focused on grade level themes of citizenship, identity, empowerment and service.
- $7,000 Technology - new laptops / replacement laptops to provide students with access to Interactive Constitution, Google forms for Reflection assessments, and other digital resources.
- $3,000 materials for the creation of student projects for National History Day, Science and Math Competitions, and the Constitution High Convention.
- $3,000 Constitution High Convention - for marketing and set-up costs.

$25,000 year x 4 years = $100,000

After year 4 this project will be self-sustaining through sponsorship and fees paid by community participation in the Constitution High Convention.