

Mikva  
Challenge

16th annual

# Action Civics

s h o w c a s e



Bridgeport  
Art Center  
10:30AM to 6:30PM

MAY  
22 2018

# DEMOCRACY IS A VERB

# WELCOME



## to the 16th annual **Action Civics** s h o w c a s e

This has been an exciting year for Action Civics in the city of Chicago.

Over **2,500** youth at  
**70** Chicago high schools completed  
over **100** youth action projects.

In the pages to follow, you will find brief descriptions of some of the amazing actions students have taken this year. The work you will see today proves once again that students not only have a diverse array of issues that they are passionate about, but also have the courage to take an active role in taking these issues on and changing their schools, neighborhoods, city, and world around them for the better. **Thank you for joining us to celebrate their amazing work!**

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## Mikva Challenge **Aspen Track**

The Aspen Institute and Mikva Challenge have launched a partnership that brings the best of our collective youth activism work together in a single initiative: **The Aspen Track of Mikva Challenge**. Together, Mikva and Aspen have empowered teams of Chicago high school students to design solutions to some of the most critical issues in their communities. The result? Innovative, relevant, powerful youth-driven solutions to catalyze real-world action and impact.

We are delighted to welcome eleven youth teams to our Action Civics Showcase this morning to formally present their projects before a panel of distinguished judges. Judges will evaluate presentations on a variety of criteria and choose one team to win an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, DC in November to attend the inaugural National Youth Convening, where they will be able to share and learn with other youth leaders from around the country.

Special thanks to Crown Family Philanthropies and the Bezos Family Foundation for their support in seeding this partnership. Crown Family Philanthropies carries on the legacy of Arie and Ida Crown through grant-making that is committed to positive social change, in Chicago and around the world. The Bezos Family Foundation, a private, independent foundation established by Jackie and Mike Bezos, envisions a world in which all young people are prepared to achieve their full potential and make a meaningful contribution to society.

### **ASPEN TRACK SCHOOLS**

Mason Elementary  
Sullivan High School  
Northside College Prep  
Juarez Community  
Academy High School  
Curie Metropolitan  
High School  
CCA Academy High School  
Association House  
High School  
Phillips Academy  
High School  
Jones College Prep  
Hancock College Prep  
Gage Park High School

Mikva  
Challenge



### **SCHEDULE**

**aspen track  
competition**  
10:30AM to 2:30PM

**lunch**  
2:30PM to 3:15PM

**showcase**  
3:15PM to 6:30PM

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\*Asterisks indicate that one or more projects were created by students on that school's CPS Student Voice Committee.



# Action Civics Projects

## Air Force Academy High School

## Alcott College Prep

## Association House High School

### ***“Student Communication” (SVC)***

In order to help students learn more about different events happening within the school, and thereby build community among students, AFAHS's Student Voice Committee created a student communication board.

### ***“All Voices on the Gun Violence Walk Out” (SVC)***

To ensure that all student voices were heard in their school's response to walkouts protesting gun violence on March 14th, they conducted small discussion groups and interviews to help individual students talk with one another about their lives and the extent of the impact of gun violence. During their walkout, they conducted interviews of those walking and with students who decided not to walk in order to make a respectful space for all sides and opinions. The various students' opinions were documented and publicized on social media.

### ***“School Field Trip Policy” (SVC)***

Students proposed a new policy on school field trips after interviewing teachers and conducting student focus groups. They aim to encourage a cultural shift in school on field trip experiences for all students. The new policy will be presented during a staff meeting at the end of May.

### ***“Composting”***

In order to protect the environment, students conducted research about the need for composting and various composting programs in place at other schools. Students created a composting system using compost from their morning breakfast with the goal of lowering overall waste levels within the school.

### ***“Gay-Straight Alliance” (Aspen Track Participant)***

To address their school culture and climate regarding LGBTQ issues, students started a Gay-Straight Alliance after school club. They ran teach-ins, a Day of Silence, and created bulletin boards to raise awareness and support a more inclusive environment.

### ***“Homelessness”***

Students researched homelessness, its root causes, and issues that affect people who are homeless. They also examined what others are doing to address this issue to inspire their action plan. To help homeless people, students created an essentials pack containing water bottles, a pair of socks, granola bars, hand wipes, small first aid kit, mouthwash, feminine products, food, and more.

### ***“Join or Die”***

Concerned about racism in the criminal justice system, students read parts of the New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, watched documentaries, and read parts of the Justice Department report on the Chicago Police Department. They then made T-shirts, participated in marches, created songs, music videos, and posters to raise awareness on racism in the criminal justice system. They also lobbied for Illinois SB 3415 to continue data collection for police stops.

### ***“Recycling”***

Students sought to promote recycling in their community by providing a recycling bin in every room in school. They also plan to make Go Green T-shirts and hold a protest at the nearest park to the school to fight for environmental protection and a cleaner neighbourhood. Flyers and posters on the benefits of recycling will be handed out. Students will also write letters to the City of Chicago sanitation, calling for recycling cans to be provided on the corners of the streets.

**Back of  
the Yards  
College  
Prep**

***“Student Voice Committee Project” (SVC)***

Over the course of this year, the Student Voice Committee at Back of the Yards College Prep worked with their peers and principal to identify and take action to address a variety of issues facing their school community.

**Bogan  
High School**

***“Anti-Bullying” (SVC)***

Students at Bogan wanted to raise awareness among their peers about the issue of bullying. They then talked to other students, conducted surveys, and further researched bullying. These students led advisory lessons, spoke in front of multiple classrooms, and created posters that were displayed around the school. Their goal is to encourage their peers to speak up if they encounter an instance of bullying.

***“LGBTQ Awareness”***

Worried that LGBTQ students did not have an outlet to express themselves, students at Bogan did online research, surveyed their peers, and spoke with other members of the school community to consider what action they could take to remedy this problem. They conducted advisory lessons and spoke with classes to raise awareness and foster an inclusive space in their school community where no one feels the need to hide who they are.

**Bowen  
High School**

***“Negative School Culture”***

Disappointed about the perception of a negative school culture at Bowen, students focused their efforts on this issue. They conducted a root cause analysis, formulated questions, conducted research and conducted a survey. They plan to compile a list of actionable items to present to the Principal and/or the LSC based on their research.

***“Police Brutality”***

Students at Bowen investigated the causes and possible solutions or reductions in police brutality in their communities. They wanted to find out more about the issue and how it affects people they know as well as people they do not know. After completing a root cause analysis and asking lots of questions, they engaged in research. They decided to conduct a survey which will be distributed through social media. They hope that the results will have some insight into the problem and possible solutions.

***“Why Teens Hate School and How to Change It”***

In exploring the research question, “why do teens hate school?”, students found that starting school late was a solution to the problem of teens disliking or skipping school. They have conducted some research on why students are not interested in high school education and plan to discuss their survey results with their principal and Local School Council. Students aim to propose a few solutions after discussing the issue with administrators, teachers and students.

**Bronzeville  
Scholastic  
Institute**

***“Who We Are?” (SVC)***

Students at Bronzeville were curious about effective communication through social media within their school community. They created a questionnaire to distribute schoolwide to see the percentage of students who use social media and in what ways they use it. They want to gather information from other schools in their district regarding social media use within their community to attain a broader view. They plan to continue their research in hopes of creating a positive image/campaign of their school via social media.

**Brooks  
College Prep**

***“This is Not Your Mama”(SVC)***

Students at Brooks noticed unwanted insects in their school building and wanted to foster a sense of ownership for their peers to feel invested in keeping their physical space clean. They interviewed and surveyed students and custodial staff several times. They looked into programs and strategies adopted by other schools and information detailed by the Chicago Teachers Union and WBEZ. They then created a campaign to raise students' awareness and to track successes through ongoing check-ins with custodial staff.

**CCA  
Academy**

***“Intra-Communal Violence and the System of Poverty”  
(Aspen Track Participant)***

Concerned with violence and systemic poverty in their community, CCA Academy students conducted research on the issues by reading journals and books as well as watching videos and documentaries. They held a school walkout and participated in the “March for our Lives” demonstration. Students also organized a gubernatorial forum and attended North Lawndale Community Coordinating Council meetings.

**Chicago  
Military  
Academy**

***“Healthy Lifestyles”***

Worried about unhealthy lifestyles of teens, students conducted research and administered a survey to learn more about their peers' diets. Students held informational sessions where they showed videos on healthy eating, ate healthy snacks, and planted a school garden.

**Chicago  
Virtual  
Charter  
School**

***“Hands Together For Homelessness”(SVC)***

Students at CVCS learned about homelessness in Chicago through a teach-in with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless at their school. They also researched statistics on homelessness and the immediate material needs of the homeless. They surveyed their peers to understand the extent to which students encounter homelessness and their understanding of homeless. Students hosted teach-ins to educate their peers, held a drive to collect materials to donate, and created cards for people to keep in their wallet with general guidelines on how to interact with and help

**Chicago  
Vocational  
Career  
Academy**

***“Mental Health: Destigmatizing Mental Illness through Education”(SVC)***

Focused on destigmatizing mental illness, students interviewed their school psychologist and conducted academic research using their school's databases. To tackle this issue, they decided to take a multipronged approach. They first worked to educate their peers and raise awareness, next they gathered and shared resources, they then established “allies” and “safe spaces” within their school community.

**Collins  
Academy  
High School**

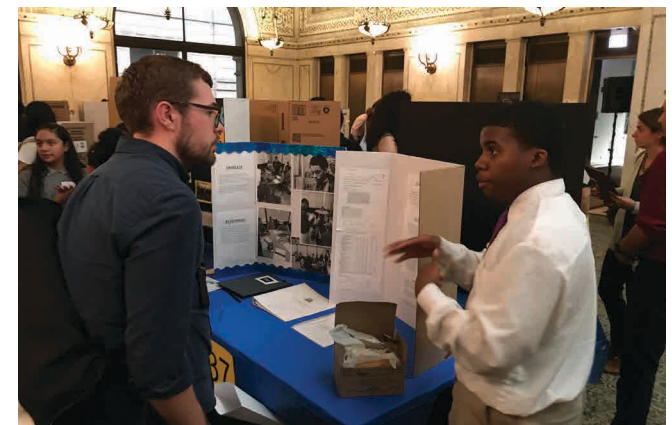
***“Uniform Policy”(SVC)***

After doing research on why school uniforms were restrictive, students advocated for the choice to wear non-khaki pants. They created a petition, collected signatures, and put together a PowerPoint to present their case the principal.

**CPS  
Student  
Advisory  
Council**

***“Budget: Youth Voice in Resource Allocation”***

Focused on how students have input in resource allocation in CPS, students conducted interviews with CPS officials, students, teachers and experts in education like Karen Lewis, Cynthia Barron, Willy De Occa, Jessica Marshall and Janice Jackson. They also conducted student surveys and created a campaign to build awareness on Local School Councils to encourage students to join their school's LSC. Students ran a workshop for their peers to increase understanding of budgets and how money is allocated in an LSC.



***“Mental Illnesses” (Aspen Track Participant)***

To raise awareness about different mental illnesses, students grouped together in pairs or trios and chose a specific illness to research. Each group created a PowerPoint to present to their class and made Movie Posters through various mediums to present at an art show. After the show, these works of art will be displayed permanently in the school at various locations, including a space that is being dedicated to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

***“School Culture/ Student-Teacher-Staff Relationships” (SVC)***

After implementing surveys and collecting testimonies on the relationships between students, staff and teachers, Curie students plan to start a Student Government. They will first organize a town hall meeting to allow students, teachers, staff, and administration to share their concerns and collectively come up with positive solutions.

***“Refugee Assistance Project, Travel Ban”***

Students interviewed a Syrian refugee and conducted research on ways of supporting refugees. They plan to create a campaign to raise awareness about the how the travel ban is affecting refugees, as well as organizing a direct-action that their class can do, such as a clothing or toy drive to benefit the refugee community in Chicago.

***“Refugee Assistance Project, Connecting locally”***

Students plan to create an awareness campaign on the impact of the travel ban on refugees, as well as organize direct actions for their class. A bake sale will be held to benefit a local refugee organization. The awareness campaign will highlight that only 11 Syrian refugees were admitted to the U.S. this year. They are also inviting a group of refugee students from Sullivan High School to their school.

***“Refugee Assistance Project, RefuSHE”***

Students plan to partner with the organization RefuSHE, an organization that supports refugee girls in East Africa, to support refugee girls in Nairobi, Kenya. Students hosted the CPS refugee intake office manager in their classroom for a Q&A session and plan to host CPS representative Robert Martwick at their school in June.

***“Climate and Culture” (SVC)***

Students at DeVry collected data through surveys of their fellow students and found that there was a need to improve culture and climate at their school. After speaking with other members of the school community, they decided to host a Game Night at DeVry to support school culture and to enhance social interactions between peers.

***“Student Voice Committee Project” (SVC)***

Over the course of this year, the Student Voice Committee at Disney II Magnet High School worked with their peers and principal to identify and take action to address a variety of issues facing their school community.

***“Walk Out Plan”***

Concerned about gun violence in schools, students conducted surveys and researched news articles as well as social media. They planned and coordinated a peaceful walkout to protest gun violence in schools and started a school Instagram account to get the word out. They also organized a small rally before the walkout with student speakers.

**Dunbar  
Vocational  
Career  
Academy**

***“Preventing Cyberbullying” (SVC)***

Students conducted a survey of their peers that focused on a range of social justice issues that related to them, their school, and their neighborhood. Based on the survey results students decided to focus on cyber bullying and gathered more data from student and staff interviews to create an awareness campaign. The awareness campaigns included presentations, activities, bulletin board displays, flyers, wristbands, and a PSA centered around increasing awareness and where to turn for help.

**Excel  
Academy  
of the  
Southwest**

***“Empowering Communities via S.T.E.M.”***

In order to address a lack of access to S.T.E.M education in their communities, Camelot students began creating Altoid/tin direct current battery backup modules to charge Androids and iPhones. They plan to utilize their prototypes to teach community members how to build their own chargers. They examined their communities to identify several potential obstacles for this project and conducted a survey to learn how teaching these skills to the community would be received. Their goal is to eventually build a solar powered charger as well as more battery chargers and maintain the academic momentum in order to keep S.T.E.M alive in their communities.

***“Excel Southwest Pop Up Social Experience”***

To address their concerns about under-resourced communities, Excel students assessed the West Englewood area through surveys, asking series of questions about issues affecting the community and best practices to resolve it. They have organized a variety of social pop up events throughout West Englewood based on the needs identified by the community.

**Farragut  
Career  
Academy**

***“S Day” (SVC)***

Students at Farragut wanted to focus on their peers' emotional and mental wellbeing so they spoke with an ally from the CPS Office of Social and Emotional Learning. They learned about mental health issues affecting CPS students, including mental disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, and trauma. They planned an entire day focused on health and wellness. Students had options to take workshops on activities ranging from yoga to peace circles to sexual and reproductive health.

***“Town Hall Meeting”***

To tackle the issues of gun violence and gun control, students examined statistics and proposed gun control legislation. They learned whether their state representatives co-sponsored any of the bills, and how they voted. They also invited their state representatives in to their school to talk about their position about gun control, and to discuss how they see the bills they supported affecting violence in Little Village. They also held a meeting with Senator Sandoval, Representative Hernandez, and will meet with Representative Taberes in June.

**Gage Park  
High School**

***“Mental Health and Peer Mentor System” (Aspen Track Participant) (SVC)***

After conducting research that revealed that majority of young Latinos and African-Americans have unmet mental health needs, students plan to provide peer and staff mentors to give fellow students at Gage Park an outlet to talk about what is going on in their lives. Students' long-term goals include creating a peer and staff mentor system for this year and next. Students' short-term goals include meeting with the school principal and working with other organizations inside and outside the school and community. They also plan to promote various school clubs to reduce stress and improve relationships as well as mental health services for the Gage Park community.



**Hancock  
College Prep  
High School**

***“Immigration Conference” (SVC)***

Students focused on the issue of immigration and conducted research by reading articles and meeting with external partners. Students also hosted their second annual community conference for their school and their community to gather information and resources on immigration.

***“Mental Health at School” (SVC) (Aspen Track Participant)***

Students read articles, conducted outreach to internal and external partners, and surveyed their peers about mental health at school. Students organized a therapy fair to provide resources for and educate their peers on ways to cope with stress between AP and Final exams.

**Harper  
High School**

***“Reducing the Stigma” (SVC)***

Concerned about the stigmatization of mental health issues in society and in their community, students at Harper focused on educating their peers about these issues. Their goal was to raise awareness and share resources so students know where they can get access to direct services.

**Infinity  
High School**

***“Sanitary Products Machines in Girls Washrooms”(SVC)***

After noticing that the sanitary products machines were not being stocked or were not functioning properly in the girls washrooms, students at Infinity conducted a survey of the female-identifying members of their community. They spoke with the Principal and Building Engineer and received permission to get these machines in working order and stocked with product so the girls would have direct access to necessary products in the washrooms.

**Jones  
College  
Prep**

***“Bridge Tutoring” (Aspen Track Participant)***

Concerned about inequity regarding academic resources offered to students in the City of Chicago, students at Jones came together to tackle this issue. They founded Bridge Tutoring which is a free, city-wide, student-led initiative designed to match under-resourced elementary students with high achieving high school-aged tutors within the same communities. Founded in November 2016, the program has expanded to include four elementary schools on the South Side of Chicago who benefit from tutoring services on a weekly basis provided by students from four neighboring high schools.

**Juarez  
Community  
Academy**

***“Bathroom Beautification” (Aspen Track Participant)***

Benito Juarez Community Academy students compared their school bathrooms with various schools, specifically Jones, Glenbard North and Mushin, and found theirs to be in bad shape. Students ran surveys with about 800 fellow students and interviewed janitors, engineers, and admin, besides working with an art teacher and art students to design murals. Students decided to add mirrors, a shelf, and art in their school bathrooms and expressed hope for long-term fundraising and advocacy to push for bathroom and locker room renovations.

***“Juarez Navigators” (SVC)***

Interested in immigration advocacy and civic action, students at Juarez researched voting history, voter apathy, and voter participation (specifically for young people and latinos) in the most recent elections. They also gathered data on how many students at Juarez would be 18 by November 6th, 2018. Students hosted a voter registration event on November 20th and a small group of students went to Washington, DC in December and again in February. They hosted a voter education event on March 14th and got 140 students to participate in an early voting field trip. They planned a “know your rights” sessions in the 2016-2017 school year and we will host another for May/ June 2018.

**Julian  
High  
School**

***“Audio Activism”***

Students explored dominant narratives about young people in Chicago and conducted surveys and interviews to expand them. They ran writing workshops for other youth and Senn High School and the ChiTeen Lit Fest, after which they created music videos that will be disseminated online.

***“Suicide: Sierra’s Side of the Story” (SVC)***

The suicide of a Julian student named Sierra led fellow students to research teen suicide through surveys and interviews. Students are planning to hold a Peace Day Teen Summit to raise awareness on teen suicide, bullying, and depression. They are also creating a video titled “Sierra’s Side of the Story” that examines the alarming rate of teen suicide and how to stop it.

**Kelly  
High  
School**

***“Teacher/ Student Relationships” (SVC)***

Students surveyed the entire student body on how teacher-student relationships could be improved. They plan to present the survey results to all staff and propose ways of making those relationships better, in order to create a healthier and more productive school environment.

**Kelvyn  
Park  
High  
School**

***“Embracing Diversity” (SVC)***

In an effort to make their school a more inclusive place, students worked to identify the various cultures that are represented in their building. They also conducted a student survey to identify how many students feel isolated, marginalized, or unacknowledged. Next they organized a student-facilitated town hall meeting for their peers to express themselves, share their concerns, and learn from adults who have had similar experiences. Students will then follow an action plan including organizing a cultural celebration.

**Kenwood  
Academy**

***“Human Trafficking” (SVC)***

After conducting research and attending a presentation by a specialist on human trafficking, students organized a variety of social pop up events throughout West Englewood based on the needs of communities. They plan to donate items to girls rescued from human traffickers.

***“Mental Health”***

Concerned about their peers who suffer with mental health issues, Kenwood students conducted research and arranged for counselors to speak with students in a “KenTalk”. Their goal is to boost support for students struggling with their mental health beyond what already exists within their school.

**Lakeview  
High  
School**

***“Student Protest”***

Interested in getting their voices involved in the gun violence conversation, students of Lake View conducted researched through a class unit. They also hosted a guest speaker in their class to learn about how they can amplify their voices by reaching out to media. To take action, they participated in a student walkout.

**Laura  
Ward  
Elementary**

***“School Fights”***

Students examined violence in their neighborhood (Garfield Park) through daily newspapers and a Heartland Alliance report. They decided to narrow our scope to their school community and met with their Dean for data and brainstorming. They plan to utilize gift cards to incentivize students who chronically misbehave and are able to reduce their weekly number of fights. They will also meet with students who agree to have check-in/check-out conversations to support them in getting through a day without fighting.

**Lindblom  
Math &  
Science  
Academy**

***“World Food and Culture Festival”***

Students at Lindblom conducted a needs assessment with their peers to identify specific issues within the school. Continuously, the need of cultural understanding and acceptance came up as an issue. Students wanted to support their community by helping celebrate the cultures and differences represented in their school. Additionally, they found their community enjoyed learning about culture through food and music. Students planned a World Food Festival to showcase and celebrate several regions and countries throughout the world including games, music, and dance.

**Marshall  
High School**

***“LGBTQ Awareness” (SVC)***

Seeking to make their school community more inclusive and welcoming for LGBTQ students, these students conducted surveys and interviews with their peers. They also did internet research as well as visiting centers that provide resources to the LGBTQ Community. Marshall students then organized a blood drive at their school.

**Mason  
Elementary**

***“Healthy Relationships”(Aspen Track Participant)***

Students at Mason researched how children with disabilities are often isolated and suffer from depression because they don't have healthy relationships with their peers. This group decided to focus on their own school community and organized a gathering to grow genuine bonds with diverse learners in their school to promote inclusivity and healthy relationships.

***“Lack of Technology”***

Students conducted research on the lack of access to technology and interviewed fellow students on how they felt about their current access to technology and what kind of technology they want in their school. Students planned to raise awareness by putting up posters in school and using the Mikva platform to spread their ideas to other schools.

**Mather  
High School**

***“Reducing Educational Inequalities”***

Students researched communities that are affected by poverty and a lack of access to up to date technology, such as North Lawndale. Students organized free classes and workshops focused on school and educational inequalities to get parents and supporters involved in ensuring that under-resourced schools have access to the resources they need and deserve.

***“Building Teacher-Student Relationships” (SVC)***

After conducting a schoolwide survey of students, teachers, admin, and parents, students noticed that there was a large amount of blame on students from teachers and vice versa around some of the biggest issues affecting their school. They concluded that better relationships between teachers and students could resolve some behavior issues. They collected more data from students and teachers and found common ground between these two groups' relationship expectations. This fall, the Student Voice Committee will lead a professional development session for teachers about building relationships with students.

**Mikva  
Challenge  
Chicago  
Housing  
Authority  
Council**

***“Increasing Youth Utilization of CHA Resources”***

Concerned about Chicago Housing Authority youth residents having access to CHA resources, students identified the existing CHA resources for youth in the areas of after school programs, employment, internships, and postsecondary support. They designed a youth-led social media marketing campaign to raise awareness and better communicate the existence of these resources with the goal of connecting the youth who need them.

**Mikva  
Challenge  
Juvenile  
Justice  
Council**

***“CPS Re-Entry”***

Focusing on the issue of reentry and education among court-involved youth, students conducted interviews with court-involved young people that are in the process of getting back into school. They presented their findings to CPS representatives and also had the opportunity to be interviewed on Fox News to share stories and raise awareness.

**Mikva  
Challenge  
Mayoral  
Youth  
Commission**

***“Postsecondary Pathways”***

Students educated themselves about CPS’s Learn. Plan. Succeed. (LPS) policy which aims to support students in seeking multiple pathways after high school and includes new graduation requirements. Students went on listening tours and conducted interviews and focus groups with CPS students, parents, and school counselors. They recognized the importance of being informed and sharing stakeholder input about LPS so they developed a video to build awareness about the policy and provide information on where people can direct questions and concerns.

**Mikva  
Challenge  
Teen Health  
Council**

***“Health”***

Seeking to examine how health barriers impact student success, students focused on their research question: “what does a youth-informed response to the needs of young people in Chicago look like?” and examined mental, sexual, nutritional, and dental health issues. They partnered with CPS and the Chicago Department of Public Health to pilot dental services in five targeted schools. With CDPH’s input, they also created a website around mental and sexual health rights and resources for youth. They are also piloting a health resource pop-up event for Back of the Yards College Prep with the goal of sharing resources with youth.

**Mikva  
Challenge  
Youth Safety  
Advisory  
Council**

***“Youth police relationships”***

Students researched how the police work as an institution and then took an individualized approach by interviewing officers about their experiences. They created recommendations that they presented to Chicago Police Department leadership and hosted conversations with police and youth in different high schools.

**Morgan Park  
High School**

***“Water Please” (SVC)***

Students were concerned about the lack of usable fountains and access to water in their school so they surveyed their peers to address this issue. They finalized action items using the Student Voice Council guide book. Students created Google Docs and surveys for engineers and photographed the fountains. They applied for a mini grant and are now repairing one of the cafeteria fountains. They are working on a plan to teach students about how to take care of school property.

**Multicultural  
Academy of  
Scholars**

***“Gun Violence” (SVC)***

Students researched gun violence to determine its history, identify important statistics, and consider power dynamics. They utilized this research to amplify the concern and raise awareness throughout the rest of the student body. Students led a walkout to call attention to the violence in Parkland earlier this year. They have planned a week of action in June on the issue to help call attention to the continued need to address the problem and activate agency amongst their classmates in helping to solve it.

***“Peer Council” (SVC)***

Students of the Peer Council utilized research-based methods of restorative justice to develop student-led solutions to misbehavior, which seek to repair damaged relationships. Students engaged in rigorous training and regularly meet with referrals to resolve issues related to student infractions.

**Northside  
College Prep**

***“Community Health and Wellness” (Aspen Track Participant)***

After conducting surveys and student discussions, students brought workshops and speakers to their school to bolster students’ engagement in pertinent dialogue and action for the betterment of the social climates in their lives. By addressing misconceptions, opening up honest discussion, and learning about healthy social behaviors, together they want to create a more uplifting, supportive, and politically active community.



### ***“Community Crime Prevention”***

Concerned about fights in their school community, students conducted surveys and researched conflict resolution skills. This group has decided to focus on one class at Orr to improve their conflict management skills and teach them to facilitate peace circles. They hope to promote peace and conflict resolution as means to solve problems at their school.

### ***“Injustice”***

To combat injustice and stereotyping, students researched current events, data, and spoke to community members. They decided to raise awareness about injustices with stereotypes through creative means such as poetry, art, and music. Their chosen audience is elementary school students to help them understand and discuss these issues.

### ***“Physical Fights at Orr”***

These students conducted surveys of the school, examined their personal experiences, and spoke with students who were engaging in fights as well as internet research. Students at Orr again concluded that the majority of fights are between girls and in the 10th grade. They are combining resources to conduct peace circles and conflict management with 9th and 10th grade students. They have also added a police component to provide insight on how violence can impact their lives and ways to avoid situations that can lead to violence.

### ***“Police Interaction”***

Concerned about interactions between students and the police, students surveyed their school and found that most students believe that police are “out to get them” or have had negative interactions with them. Students are planning to have three events with the police. The first is a “get to know you” gathering/lunch, the second is a Peace Circle, and the third is a Game Day or picnic with the police. Their goal is also to introduce the same procedure to the 9th or 10th grade to sustain the project with a different group of students at the school.

### ***“Preventing and Reducing Marijuana Use at Orr”***

To address the issue of marijuana use among their peers, students at Orr conducted internet research, student surveys and examined their own life experiences as well as health reports. They created posters to present information about the negative effects of marijuana among teens with developing bodies.

### ***“Violence Against Girls at Orr”***

Worried about violence against girls in their school community, students at Orr conducted a survey of their peers as well as research on this topic. From the surveys they discovered that the majority of fights were happening with 10th grade students. To address this issue, these students are setting up Peace Circles and teaching conflict management skills to their peers.

### ***“Creating Safer Communities” (Aspen Track Participant)***

To improve the relationship between teens and cops in the Bronzeville community, Team T.A.C.T.I.C.S (Teens and Cops Together in Chicago Successfully) ran surveys and found that students had a low level of trust for police officers, as well as a high number of encounters with law enforcement. The team created a curriculum consisting of 50-minute workshops designed to create a comfortable environment between officers and students that could lead to meaningful discussion and more understanding. After its first workshop this year, the team decided that including more stakeholders was critical. It held a community meeting to discuss this, as well as the school-to-prison pipeline. The team believes that building trust between youth and law enforcement is crucial for a safer community.

**Phoenix  
Military  
Academy**

***“Keeping It Reel Film Project”***

These students wanted to learn more about critical social topics such as transgender rights, drug addiction, and DACA through the point of view of documentary film. They researched databases and examined personal experiences and documentary films. Students partnered with Kartemquin Films to explore student-centered, relevant topics worthy of exploring through the medium of documentary film.

**Prosser  
Career  
Academy**

***“School Library Improvement” (SVC)***

Students plan to hold a carnival at the end of the year to raise funds for their school library, in order to cater to student needs for greater access to technology, resources, and a space for them to do work. Students also petitioned members of the community for book donations and other materials to improve the library.

***“Feminine Products for Bathrooms” (SVC)***

Students successfully got their school to install dispensers for feminine products in female bathrooms. Many female students previously did not have such access during the day, unlike male students who could get condoms during counseling.

***“School Start Time” (SVC)***

Students surveyed fellow students and staff and found that they preferred an earlier school start time than 8.45am. The survey results were presented to the Local School Council and to the CPS Department of Transportation to advocate for an earlier start time. Students also wrote letters to push for it.

**Reilly  
Elementary**

***“The Drug Free Reilly Project” (SVC)***

Students surveyed middle school students and found that their peers felt that smoking marijuana posed conflicts in their Reilly community. Students organized workshops and decided to make bracelets to promote a drug-free community. They are also raising awareness among fifth to eighth graders on the harm of drug use.

**Richards  
Career  
Academy**

***“Disconnect to Reconnect” (SVC)***

Students proposed a policy (TelePhone Flow) to curb excessive cell phone usage in their school and explained it to students, teachers, and staff members. The policy has been implemented throughout the building and in all classrooms. Students are also running a survey to understand students' attachment to their cell phones and the impact on their mental health. Students are considering a campaign to promote “unplugged” as the new “cool”, coming up with strategies like Digital Detox to go for periods of time without technology, videos, a webpage of resources, posters, and T-shirts.

**Roosevelt  
High School**

***“Coffee Love Student Health Workshop” (SVC)***

Seeking to improve students' mental health at their school, students at Roosevelt surveyed students about their concerns related to health. They contacted community resources to organize workshops about stress relief.

***“RHS Spirit Store”***

Thinking about school spirit and community awareness, students conducted surveys regarding their peers' involvement in programs and activities at school and outside of school. They created a system of awards (Teddy Bucks) based on participation in activities. Students are able to purchase spirit items in the store with Teddy Bucks.

**Rowe  
Middle  
School**

***“Gentrification in West Town”***

Focusing on gentrification, students conducted a community walk of West Town and hosted 1st Ward Alderman Joe Moreno in their class to learn more. Students also researched ways other communities have addressed gentrification. They created flyers and a petition that was signed and sent to the 2nd Ward Alderman Brian Hopkins. They also met with Jose Rivera who is Chief of Staff at the 2nd Ward. Students created a website to raise awareness and money for families who cannot afford housing because of gentrification. They sent letters to the aldermen of the 1st and 2nd Ward promoting no-zoning laws to be implemented into the areas.

**Senn  
High School**

***“School Safety” (SVC)***

Students planned school walkouts, meetings with public officials, and voter registration to counter gun violence in schools. They also raised awareness on social media and worked with national student movements on the issue of school shootings.

***“Student Council Scholarship” (SVC)***

Students held several fundraisers throughout the year to provide scholarships for undocumented students, those who could not file for FASFA, to go to college.

**Simeon High  
School**

***“Student Teacher Relationships and Student Motivation” (SVC)***

To identify this issue, students conducted interviews with staff and students to create top issues list. They also polled over 800 students with a paper survey, tallied the results, and conducted a root cause analysis and smaller focus groups. Students worked to come up with a way to provide more student incentives for all students, possibly tied to attendance. They also plan to do schoolwide activities to build community among students and teachers.

**Social Justice  
High School**

***“Paper Recycling” (SVC)***

In order to reduce the environmental footprint of their school, students at Social Justice promoted environmental protection and recycled paper in school after seeking opinions from teachers and students on paper waste.

**Solorio  
Academy  
High School**

***“Combating Homelessness in Gage Park”***

Students plan to organize a supplies drive and distribute 50 “blessings bags” to the homeless in Chicago in collaboration with Project I Am to help them reach their annual goal of 6,000 bags. Students will also raise awareness on the cause and effects of homelessness in the city and in the community in senior seminar classes that will have donation bins. Flyers will be distributed in school to motivate other students to donate too.

***“The Language of Body Shaming” (SVC)***

Aiming to tackle body shaming, students conducted interviews and surveys on fellow students and researched on what other schools had done on the issue. Students planned to talk to the school administration to hold professional development courses for the deans, security, and teachers on body shaming. Students would also advocate for a change of language in the student handbook on uniform policy.

***“Mental Health Awareness”***

Students plan to hold a survey in school on mental health issues like suicide, anxiety and depression, to help organize an awareness event during Mental Health Awareness Week. Activities planned include a movie screening and discussion, yoga class, and creations of artwork to be displayed outside the cafeteria. Students will also place resources on mental health in the counseling office, such as pamphlets from NAMI, books on mental health, and a box for students to leave requests for counseling services. Through these activities, students aim to end stigma and lack of knowledge surrounding mental health in their school.

***“Youth Gang Prevention”***

Through research on the cause and effects of gang violence in their neighborhood, students found that gangs typically recruited younger students. Students will be working with BUILD (Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development) to hold an event for elementary schools and middle schools in the Gage Park area to provide youth with alternate opportunities to joining a gang, such as holding a community event in Senka Park, a youth basketball tournament, or sharing personal stories with you to deter gang membership.

**South  
Loop  
Elementary**

***“Urban Gardening”***

With the aim of creating an oasis in school, students started a garden by consulting three community stakeholders for support and training. They placed mulch, seedling, and fertilizer in the garden to enrich the soil, besides planting flower seeds and herbs to beautify their community. They will also put in some furniture so people can relax at the school garden. Students plan to educate fellow students about the importance of gardening.

**Steinmetz  
College Prep**

***“Steinmetz Speak Out”***

Steinmetz students involved with Youth Outreach Services sought to promote mental health and provide new supports at their school. They worked with mentors to learn both about community organizing and marketing and are now planning “Steinmetz Speak Out” - a new annual student-organized event to create space for student voices to raise issues prevalent within their school.

**Suder  
Montessori  
Elementary**

***“Suder Students and Gang Violence”***

Students interviewed fellow students in different grades to understand the effect of gun violence on young people. They planned to advise students on how to seek help for trauma resulting from exposure to gun violence.

***“Helping Hands”***

Students started an organization called Helping Hands to provide essential products to homeless people. They solicited support from members of Faith’s church youth group and planned to sponsor another follow-up meeting in the weeks to come. Next year, students plan to expand their outreach.

**Sullivan  
High  
School**

***“Creating Inclusive Communities” (Aspen Track)***

To promote inclusivity, students held small group discussions to discuss student needs and experiences. They also surveyed fellow students on whether they felt safe at Sullivan. Students then pushed the English Department to have students express, through drawings, poetry or pictures, what they were proud of in their culture and what made them unique. On one day in the cafeteria, students were asked what made their culture unique, what made them proud to be a Sullivan student, and what programs, teachers, or aspects of the school made them feel comfortable. Students recorded videos of fellow students saying “Tigers Unite” either in English or in their native language. After the project, Sullivan will be creating their first international week to celebrate school diversity and unity. Students also plan to design shirts that say “one Sullivan” that will be made part of the school uniform.

***“Lunch Improvement/ Student Protest” (SVC)***

Students met with community organizers to help organize a protest against gun violence. One of the students gave a speech at a later rally. Students also worked with a facilitator to find out ways of improving school lunches and student organizing.

***“School Beautification” (SVC)***

Students worked with engineers to look at affordable school beautification projects and looked at the school’s current plans to improve the infrastructure. Students planned to recruit a volunteer interior designer to design the school entrance. They also planned to use grant money to buy paint to repaint the school entrance to make it more vibrant and modern.



## **Taft High School**

### ***“Improving Teacher and Student Relationships”***

Students discovered through research that positive student-teacher relationships were the key to preventing horrific events like school shootings. They found that many positive outcomes occurred when there was at least one adult that a student trusted. As Taft High School is overcrowded, students found that this is the key to improving the school's overall conditions. They planned to get support from the school principal and present professional development plans to school staff. Students also planned to attend a team-building course, besides creating a personality/ multiple intelligence test in school and pairing students with teachers who had similar interests. A school-wide Olympic Day is also in the works for the 2018-2019 school year.

### ***“Student Voice Committee Project” (SVC)***

Over the course of this year, the Student Voice Committee at Taft High School worked with their peers and principal to identify and take action to address a variety of issues facing their school community.

### ***“Courageous Conversations” (SVC)***

Students aimed to teach fellow students how to code switch to reduce swearing in the classroom. To achieve that goal, students planned to model courageous conversations on difficult issues, such as what they would say to their fathers if they were present emotionally and / or physically.

### ***“Beautify Our Space” (SVC)***

Students volunteered on a Saturday together with other community partners like CityYear and Comcast to repaint the school walls in a bid to beautify them.

## **Uplift Community High School**

### ***“Promoting Student Centered Activities”***

Students took action on the lack of activities reflecting student interest and concerns, after investigating student concerns about the lack of administrative involvement in students' school lives and the lack of input from students to the administration about their ideas for the school. They met up with the school principal and managed to persuade her to get more student input for school events and activities, resulting in sponsorship for a few events.

## **Vaughn Occupational High School**

### ***“Bully-Free... The Way To Be!”***

Students read articles about bullying, participated in role-playing activities, completed a root causes tree activity, and a 5 Whys activity about bullying. They also researched possible interventions and solutions. Students are creating two different student designed anti-bullying t-shirts to spread the word and promote peace in their school community. They are also planning a positive post-it day in their school cafeteria, and investigating other anti-bullying educational opportunities.

### ***“Student Voice Committee Project” (SVC)***

Over the course of this year, the Student Voice Committee at Von Steuben M.S.C. worked with their peers and principal to identify and take action to address a variety of issues facing their school community.

### ***“Supporting Local Businesses in Albany Park”***

Students analysed maps of Albany Park to identify local food establishments and perused customer reviews before listing suitable outlets on pamphlets and posters. They also interviewed several local business owners to gather first-hand information about the successes and challenges of operating in Albany Park alongside big name competitors. Students created a pamphlet, poster, and map listing local food business in Albany Park, after which they distributed them at a local CTA stop and college.

## **Tilden Career Community High School**

## **Von Steuben M.S.C.**

### Washington High School

#### ***“Improving Our School Building” (SVC)***

Concerned about issues with their school building and inequity in Chicago school facilities, students conducted a walkthrough of their building and surveyed teachers to highlight problems with their physical space. They also examined the selective enrollment high schools in Chicago and compared/contrasted facilities. They met with their principal to discuss these issues and invited CPS officials to conduct a walkthrough of their building. Students are using a Twitter account to raise awareness. They also attended a Board of Education meeting, along with parents and community members, to lobby CPS to update their building and provide them with an athletic field for their teams a priority.

### Wells Community Academy High School

#### ***“Student Voice Committee Project” (SVC)***

Over the course of this year, the Student Voice Committee at Wells Community Academy High School worked with their peers and principal to identify and take action to address a variety of issues facing their school community.

### Westing- house College Prep

#### ***“Electoral Engagement”***

Students learned a lot about political efficacy in AP Government and the demographics of who votes in elections, especially primaries. They planned a candidate forum for the senior class. They used this forum as an opportunity to explain how to vote in Illinois, what a primary is, and provide a voter's guide for the students. The students also got to hear from two candidates for Cook County Commissioner. They then took students on an early voting trip.

#### ***“Grading Policies” (SVC)***

Concerned about grading policies at their school, students created two separate surveys - one for students and one for staff. They then created a policy recommendation to create a grade-level assessment calendar. They also gave timing recommendations for the entry of formative and summative assessments. They presented these solutions to administration and spoke to teacher teams.

### World Language High School

#### ***“Solidaridad with Syria”***

Concerned that Americans have lost track of the suffering of Syrian refugees and the suffering caused by the indiscriminate bombing attacks by the government forces, students at World Language set out to raise awareness of the struggle and work in solitary with aid groups (like the White Helmets) whose mission is to help people in Syria.

#### ***“Students in Teal”***

Seeking to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, students worked to give incoming college freshmen and high school seniors information about how to identify sexual assault and what their options are if they are victims of this terrible crime.

#### ***“World Language Cares”***

In order to support the 11,000+ homeless youth in Chicago, including those enrolled at the Little Village Lawndale campus, World Language students created care packages containing items needed by homeless youth such as: clothing, school supplies, toiletries, etc.



# THANK YOU!

Mikva  
Challenge



We would like to thank all of the people who have helped with the program this year, including the **teachers, principals and administrators** at the schools, expert guest speakers, **elected officials**, and **community leaders** who met with the students over the course of the year. Additional thanks go to the **Bridgeport Art Center** for enabling us to host this year's fair in such a great venue. We'd also like to thank our Issues to Action program and event sponsors and **Chicago Public Schools Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement** for enabling us to bring Action Civics programming to thousands of students across the district. A special thanks to the members of our Board of Directors and Emerging Leaders Board, Zoe Mikva and the Mikva family. We also honor the memory of our mentor and co-founder, Judge Abner Mikva, with this special event and the work we do everyday to engage young people in democratic life.



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Mikva Challenge is a nonpartisan agency that provides Chicago high school youth with authentic opportunities to participate in the democratic process and prepares them to be informed, engaged, and ethical citizens and community leaders. We engage over 6,000 teens and their teachers in Action Civics programs each year, focusing on communities where the majority of youth are low-income and of color. Mikva youth build critical 21st century skills to help them succeed in college and career.

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