



Professional Development Options

Mikva Challenge provides a wide range of professional development workshops that can be brought to your school, organization or district. Popular workshops are highlighted below. We also provide customized training based on a school or district's specific needs.

Action Civics as a tool for equity

Action Civics can play a significant role in making schools and classrooms more equitable, culturally responsive and inclusive. The Action Civics process works to amplify ALL voices and engage students through relevant, student driven learning. Through the Action Civics process, students activate their voices, leverage their identities to examine power, and learn how to be an active and engaged member of a community.

Creating democratic classrooms

Participants explore the impact of a positive and inclusive classroom as a space where students feel empowered, safe, and challenged, and where leadership and community are practiced regularly. In this session, participants will become familiar with social emotional learning strategies informed by Action Civics pedagogy to create classrooms where students take ownership of their learning and engage fully as participants of a community. Participants will learn community-building strategies they can immediately use, and examine teacher case studies on how best to infuse democratic practices into the classroom.

Amplifying youth voice: Project Soapbox

The first step to being an active and engaged citizen is to be able to stand up and speak out on an issue that you care about. Challenging the stereotype that young people are apathetic, Mikva's Project Soapbox curriculum provides an avenue for students to identify a passion and learn effective public speaking skills. Students also develop their listening and empathy skills. This workshop walks participants through the Project Soapbox process, including how to organize a school-wide event and how to utilize social media to amplify youth voices to a larger audience.

Taking action: community problem solving

Mikva's six step process for youth activism challenges students to examine their own identities and their communities from an asset based lens, identify issues of importance to them in their communities, conduct intensive primary research about these issues, analyze power structures in their community, develop strategies for change, and take action to improve policy – while reflecting on the process throughout. Participants will explore each of the six steps in depth, examine and discuss case studies of successful student action civics projects, and discuss key strategies for implementing this community problem-solving process in their classrooms.

Taking action: elections

Participants will learn strategies that engage students in campaigns and elections by having them explore their own ideologies, learn about the candidates, explore media messages during election season, examine the role of money in elections, and get involved personally in electoral politics through a variety of actions that build confidence in every young person's belief in their power to effect change. Participants will design ways to incorporate the Mikva Elections in Action curriculum in their school or after school club and develop non-partisan, Action Civics projects around the electoral process.

News literacy – a critical skill for the 21st century

With the proliferation of fake news sites and the fact that most youth consume news through social media outlets, developing critical news literacy is essential for the health of democracy. Participants will learn strategies to engage students in critical news analysis and in the development of skills needed to critically consume news. Participants will also learn how to support students in taking action on an issue they care about using the skills and mediums analyzed throughout the unit. Student created media projects will be explored as well as how these actions can transform students' knowledge and attitudes towards the political process.

Taking informed action: how to implement a high quality action project

One of the hardest parts of the Action Civics process is engaging students in meaningful action projects. This workshop will help teachers connect learning objectives for their students to project outcomes and explore the continuum of actions with a focus on process rather than product. Participants will explore the difference between service learning and civic action and utilize frameworks to create sustainable change.

Facilitating courageous conversations

Many teachers shy away from teaching civics because of the controversial nature of certain topics and the challenge of navigating those conversations in class. But if school is not a place to share divergent viewpoints, where will students learn the skill of engaging in civic discourse? This session will offer strategies for teachers as they embark on civic dialogue as well as address the trauma that students bring to our classrooms that sometimes surfaces in Soapbox speeches and discussion and how to effectively address it and support students.

“I learned that it is important to view students as individuals who can enact change now and not just in the future. It has inspired me to place more trust and confidence in my students and their voice.”