Mikva Challenge
Professional Learning Options

Virtual Professional Development to Foster Student Engagement in a Remote and In-Person Classroom

Select all workshops in a recommended sequence, or select the one that is right for your school or district. No prerequisites required.

Creating Democratic Classrooms

Workshop A: Building Community and Developing Empathy

Educators learn how to create a positive and inclusive learning environment where students feel empowered, safe, and challenged, and where leadership and community are practiced regularly. While remote learning creates new challenges to achieving these objectives, it also creates even more need for these kinds of connections. In this session, educators become familiar with social-emotional learning strategies informed by Action Civics pedagogy where students take ownership of their learning and engage fully as participants of a community.

Workshop B: Engaging in Courageous Conversations

Controversial topics are great opportunities for learning when teachers feel comfortable navigating difficult conversations with students. Educators will be provided with facilitation tools and curricula to guide their work in navigating challenging issues and to build students' empathy, listening skills, and shared dignity in the classroom. In addition, we will discuss how to handle students revealing personal trauma as they discuss issues and give speeches on topics of concern. This workshop can be tailored to a specific topic area such as teaching elections or talking about racism.

Workshop C: Critically Consuming Information

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.

Equity, Student Voice, and SEL Development

Workshop A: Equity and Action Civics

In this workshop, teachers learn the activities and tools to help students explore social identities and how they shape civic identities, privilege and oppression. Within this framework, students are then able to form their own opinions, activate their civic voices and effectively address root causes to societal problems.

Workshop B: Amplify Student Voice and Develop Social and Emotional Learning Skills

Using Mikva's Project Soapbox curriculum, educators learn how to encourage students to be active and engaged citizens by speaking out on an issue that they care about. Project Soapbox provides an avenue for students to identify a passion and learn effective public speaking, listening, and empathy skills. Independent evaluations of Soapbox have demonstrated strong, positive impacts on students' civic attitudes and on social emotional skills. This workshop walks participants through the Project Soapbox process and explores options for hosting both virtual and in person Soapbox events.

Taking Informed Action

Workshop A: Taking Informed Action

Learn Mikva's best practices for youth activism. This workshop introduces participants to our Issues to Action process where students:

- examine their personal identities and their communities from an asset based lens,
- identify issues of importance to them,
- conduct intensive primary research and analyze power structures,
- develop strategies and take action to bring change,
- showcase and celebrate their work.

Workshop B: Engaging Youth in Elections

Even students who are not eligible to vote can have their voices heard and learn about elections and the democratic process. Participants in this session will learn strategies to engage students in campaigns and elections by having them explore their own ideologies, learn about the candidates, explore media messages, develop their ability to be critical consumers of information, and find creative ways to get involved in the election process.