



## NORTH READING HIGH SCHOOL

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To the Parents of Junior and Senior students at North Reading High School:

North Reading High School's mission statement indicates our commitment to promoting citizenship in the 21st century and leadership through service. Citizenship entails both rights and responsibilities, and it is our goal to encourage that sense of social responsibility and leadership amongst our students. To that end, please read the following information about Civic Action Projects at North Reading High School.

In order to both further this educational mission and meet new requirements passed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, North Reading High School will be transitioning its former Community Service Project requirement into a new Civic Action Project to be completed over the junior and senior years.

In June 2018, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted a revised [History and Social Science Curriculum Framework](#) which included as one of its core priorities an aim to emphasize and expand civics education across all grades. On November 8, 2018, Governor Charlie Baker signed [Chapter 296 of the Acts of 2018](#), An Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement, which includes provisions requiring all Massachusetts public high schools to provide a student-led nonpartisan civics action project.

*The law includes the following provisions related to student-led civics projects:*

**(c) Each public school serving students in the eighth grade and each public high school shall provide not less than 1 student-led, non-partisan civics project for each student; ...**

Civics projects may be individual, small group or class wide\*, and designed to promote a student's ability to: (i) analyze complex issues; (ii) consider differing points of view; (iii) reason, make logical arguments and support claims using valid evidence; (iv) engage in civil discourse with those who hold opposing positions; and (v) demonstrate an understanding of the connections between federal, state and local policies, including issues that may impact the student's school or community.

*In addition, the law authorizes:*

Promotion of youth membership on municipal boards, committees and commissions and a non-partisan high school voter challenge to encourage eligible students to register or pre-register to vote and participate in municipal and state elections.

In order to comply with these state standards, the Community Service Program at North Reading High School will be modified to meet the expectations of the Civic Action Project. This packet includes an introduction to Civics Action Projects, an outline of the 6 stages in the process, specific requirements for juniors, and, finally, specific requirements for seniors. Should you be interested, full guidance from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding Civics Action Projects can be found [here](#). Students can expect supplemental documents and instruction from their social studies teachers.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Loprete, *Principal*

Matthew Oosting, *Curriculum Specialist, Social Studies Department*

## What Are Student Led Civics Action Projects?

### Civic Action Projects are...

<b>Student-Led:</b>	Students should make informed decisions about the issue, process, and goals for their civics project even as the teacher is setting the broader learning objectives. Student choice defines this experience. In doing so, the teacher takes on the role of facilitator, offering guidance, choices, and suggestions, especially at key inflection points of the project.
<b>Project-Based:</b>	Students achieve their learning objectives not by rote practice but by applying knowledge and skills for an extended period of time to achieve the goal of solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question. Students conduct an inquiry and demonstrate their learning by engaging with or presenting to the public, taking their work beyond the classroom.
<b>Real-World:</b>	The skills students practice are transferrable to their lives outside of the classroom and into their futures as adult civic agents. By pushing past hypothetical scenarios or theoretical action, real-world application teaches students the power of their voices as constituents, even if they ultimately do not achieve 100% of their goals.
<b>Rooted in an Understanding of Systems Impact:</b>	A strong student-led civics project aims for impact at the level of the system, as opposed to an isolated action that's impact ends after completion. To strive for systems impact, student actions focus on the processes, policies, institutions, and people most connected to a root cause of an issue.
<b>Goal-Driven:</b>	Students should develop goals aimed at addressing the root causes of their issues in order to make long-term change. This may be through influencing public opinion on an issue and/or influencing a policy goal.
<b>Inquiry-Based:</b>	Student-led civics projects provide an authentic opportunity for students to practice research skills, to ask probing questions about real-world issues, and make judgements about the appropriateness and success of various research methods. Students should consider multiple points of view, from next-door neighbors to community leaders and elected officials, and in doing so develop an understanding of the breadth of the issue, including opposing viewpoints.
<b>Non-partisan:</b>	Student-led civics projects may lead to discussions of relevant and pressing contemporary issues. "Non-partisan" refers specifically to whether a project takes a side in party politics and party competitions. Student-led civics projects should not be developed in support of candidates in particular elections. They can be directed at ballot propositions. They should include research and information on all sides of an issue and communications issuing from the project should be targeted at audiences without party affiliations or at audiences with multiple party affiliations.
<b>Process-Focused:</b>	The success of student-led civics projects derives from students learning and engaging in an effective process for civic action, not in accomplishing 100% of their goals. Change takes time, and their work hopefully moved the issue forward even if they have not achieved their goal.
<b>Action-Based:</b>	A student-led civics project using the six stages requires students to take action toward achieving systems impact and to engage with decision-makers. More guidance on the systems impact nature of these projects as well how they differ from traditional community service will provided by your student's social studies teacher.

## Structure of the Civics Action Project

### ***Stage 1: Examine Self and Civic Identity***

Students start by exploring issues and topics that matter to them, their families, and communities. They can begin this process by examining challenges they are currently experiencing that they feel go unaddressed or are under-addressed, or alternatively they can build upon valuable work that is already done in the community to solve problems.

### ***Stage 2: Identifying an Issue***

After students have spent time exploring and identifying issues that matter to them, the next step is to identify a focus issue for their student-led civics project.

### ***Stage 3: Researching and Investigating***

During this stage, students engage in rigorous research. The purpose of this research is to examine the context, policies, perspectives, and history of the issue, and to learn about possible root causes.

### ***Stage 4: Developing an Action Plan***

Once students have determined the root causes at the core of their project, it is time to build a theory of action and action plan aimed at achieving systems impact.

### ***Stage 5: Taking Action***

Students begin acting on the tactics they planned. They move beyond the walls of the classroom and exercise their voice. This is the stage that will be the most unique to each project, depending on the choices students make along the way.

### ***Stage 6: Reflecting and Showcasing***

Students end their project with a final, summative reflection and work showcase. Such a showcase is a best practice of project-based learning that supports student pride and ownership. Students should reflect on individual growth and project success throughout the six stages.

## Junior Year Community Service: Stage 1 and Stage 2

Juniors will engage in 24 hours of community service focusing on Stages 1 and 2 of the Civic Action Project. The goal of community service during Junior year is to expose students to an array of issues facing the community. Toward that end, students will be required to submit service hours completed in at least 3 different service areas.

### Timeline

12 hours will be completed between June 30th of sophomore year and the end of the first full week of school in December junior year.

12 hours will be completed between the second full week of December and the end of the first full week of May during their junior year.

**Note:** Previously, students were permitted to submit up to 18 hours of service before the December deadline. To facilitate a greater exploration of community issues and receive guidance from teachers, students will now submit 12 hours at each deadline.

### Basic Requirements

Juniors will submit verification of service sheets AND complete an essay.

- Essays should reflect on the service completed AND suggest what community issues or needs might be of interest for their Civics Action Project during senior year.
- Should their service fail to expose any meaningful needs, teachers may require students to find alternative and more meaningful avenues of service
- This service and essay will represent 15% of the quarter 2 and 4 grades for juniors.

Students must complete at least 4 hours of their service in each of 3 separate service categories. See below for service categories and suggestions for service.

Non-profits vs For-Profits: You **may** engage in service hosted by a non-profit organization **or** a for-profit organization, as long as you can demonstrate the community value of the service you are performing through your essay.

#### **What does not count for service?**

- Paid hours, Internship hours, hours accumulated during a normal school day,
- Baking for a bake sale

### Service Areas and Suggested Activities

#### **North Reading High School**

- Serving for a team or club to promote its interests and opportunities for students.
- Assisting the guidance department with its special programming to assist students with planning for after high school.

#### **Education**

- Serving as a teacher's assistant at either a middle or elementary school in the district.
- Serving as a mentor for local youth
- Working with the town Youth Services Department
- Volunteering to tutor younger students or English Language Learners.

Service Areas and Suggested Activities cont'd.	<b>Serving Those in Need</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working for elderly or disabled community members who express need.</li> <li>● Volunteering at food pantry, soup kitchen, etc.</li> <li>● Working on a Habitat for Humanity site</li> </ul>
	<b>Healthcare</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Volunteering at an area hospital</li> </ul>
	<b>Eldercare or Disabilities Care</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Volunteering at local nursing homes or assisted living facilities.</li> </ul>
	<b>Local Government</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inquiring of town government or local residents regarding issues facing the town.</li> <li>● Helping to facilitate information distribution around town issues or events.</li> </ul>
	<b>Fundraisers</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To count, you must prove that <b>you actually raised funds</b> for the charity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A minimum of 10 pledges or \$100 raised is required for these hours to count</li> <li>○ For each additional 5 pledges or \$50 above the “10 pledge/\$100” minimum, students can earn an extra ½ hour of service beyond the actual time spent at the event. <i>This requirement MUST be verified by the supervisor of the event.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<b>Religious Institutions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All work done for or on behalf of religious organizations has traditionally counted and will continue to count towards community service.</li> </ul>	

## Senior Year Civic Action Project

Seniors will engage in a complete Civic Action Project (CAP) that will require 24 hours of out of class preparation and service. The plan will be broken down as follows:

<b>Quarter 1</b> Finalize Stages 1 and 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6 hours of service will be completed between June 30th of Junior Year and the end of the 3rd full week in October during their senior year.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will submit verification sheets and an essay that reflects on the service completed, what it has revealed about local or regional issues, and finally what the <b>focus area and issue will be</b> for their Civics Action Projection.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% of Quarter 1 Grade</li> </ul>
<b>Quarter 2</b> Finalize Stages 3 and 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will work with teacher guidance in class and spend 6 hours out of class researching their chosen issue and developing an action plan for how they might address the issue.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will submit a Civic Action Plan Proposal that will include a background on the Stage 1 and 2 service that helped identify the issue, properly cited research that provides greater context on the issue and current efforts to address it, and finally the student's plan for their own unique contribution to solve this problem.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of Quarter 2 Grade. Verification sheets will not be required, the grade will rest entirely on the quality of research, reflection and ultimately the plan developed by the student.</li> </ul>
<b>Quarter 3</b> Finalize Stages 5 and 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will complete at least 6 hours of verifiable service that represents an implementation of their action plan.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will submit an essay that reflects on the service and how well it fulfilled the objectives of their Civic Action Project.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% of Quarter 3 Grade. Students will submit verification sheets of service along with their essay.</li> </ul>
<b>Quarter 4</b> Stage 6- Civic Action Project Showcase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of their final quarter, students will prepare a standalone presentation that walks their audience through the process of their Civic Action Project.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Civic Action Fair will be held that showcases these presentations for Seniors first and then for all NRHS community members, including families.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15% of the Quarter 4 grade.</li> </ul>

## Modifications to this Plan for the 2020-2021 School Year

The obligations of the 2018 law require that we engage this year's students in the Civic Action Plan Project. Toward the goal of creating the opportunity for a meaningful Civic Action Project and accommodating the truly unique circumstances of this year, the requirements of the project will be modified as follows:

### **Junior Year Community Service:**

Juniors will be expected to submit **6 hours** of community service before the end of the first full week in May, 2021. Juniors will submit verification of service sheets AND complete an essay.

**Stage  
1 and 2**

- 2 of those hours may have been completed prior to the first full week of December, 2020.
- At least 2 hours of community service must be completed in each of 2 separate service areas.
- Essays should reflect on the service completed and suggest what community issues or needs might be of interest for their Civics Action Project during senior year.

### **Senior Year Civic Action Project:**

**Seniors will engage in the Civic Action Project over Quarters 2, 3 and 4.**

**Quarter 2**  
Stages 1 and 2,  
begin Stage 3

- 2 hours of service will be completed prior to the end of 2nd quarter to explore community issues.
- Students will submit verification sheets and an essay that reflects on the service completed, what it has revealed about local or regional issues, and finally what the **focus area and issue will be** for their Civics Action Projection.
- 10% of Quarter 2 Grade. Students will submit Verification sheets along with reflective essay.

**Quarter 3**  
Stages 3 and 4,  
begin Stage 5

- Students will work with teacher guidance in class and spend 4 hours out of class researching their chosen issue and developing an action plan for how they might address the issue.
- Students will submit a Civic Action Plan Proposal that will include a background on the Stage 1 and 2 service that helped identify the issue, properly cited research that provides greater context on the issue and current efforts to address it, and finally the student's plan for their own unique contribution to solve this problem.
- After receiving approval from their teacher, students will begin to engage in 4 hours of verifiable service to implement their Civic Action Plan.
- 20% of Quarter 3 Grade. Verification sheets will not be required, the grade will rest entirely on the quality of research, reflection and ultimately the plan developed by the student.

**Quarter 4**  
Stages 5 and 6

- Students will complete their 4 hours of verifiable service that represents an implementation of their action plan.
- Students will submit an essay that reflects on the service and how well it fulfilled the objectives of their Civic Action Project.
- Students will prepare a standalone virtual presentation that walks their audience through the process of their Civic Action Project.
- A Virtual Civic Action Project Fair will enable students and families to review the projects implemented.
- 20% of Quarter 4 Grade. Students will submit verification sheets of service along with their essay and virtual project.