

Student Participation in Generation Citizen Lowell and State House Civics Day

This past week there were two culminating events for Lowell's Generation Citizen program. Both LHS and the Pyne Arts School participated in a local Civics Day in the Irish Auditorium this past Wednesday. There were 26 separate presentations of Civics projects that ranged from recycling to political equity to homelessness.

Generation Citizen emulates the policy process for civic government by walking students through the important stages of project prioritization, consensus building, research, targeting influential stakeholders, identifying authorities, and figuring out how to rally public support. Each class sends a delegation of 4 to 5 students to explain to a panel of judges the work that they have done. The Wednesday LHS presentation allowed for all of the students — not just delegation members — to view other classes' work. It also provided a dry run for the presentations at the State House Civics day, which took place last Friday.

At the State House Civics day, Lowell's 26 groups were about 40% of the total statewide representation for the fall; Lowell has the largest overall program in the Commonwealth. Three of LHS's teams took home awards — Chris Selvaggio's class took the Grassroots Change award for its work on increasing education around sexual harassment. One of Tom Thornton's teams was awarded the Collaboration and Diversity Award for their work on creating a public-private partnership to offer after-school drivers ed out of LHS. Finally, one of Stephanie Donahue's groups won the Open Mindedness Award for their work on increasing public awareness and access to running for local office.

On the Pyne Arts side, Mike Neagle, the GC social studies teacher there, was given the Teacher Change-maker Award, recognizing him as the most influential of the GC teachers this fall in his work with his students. One of the Pyne Arts student groups won the Action Award for their work on suicide prevention.

Each of the awards represents core values of the GC organization around civic work. The awards represent the total points awarded to the projects and presentations by a group of judges who each evaluate four presentations. Our head of school Marianne Busted and principal of the PAMS Wendy Roberge-Crocker both served as judges.

Teacher participants at the State House included Tom Thornton, Dick O'Loughlin, Kara Pigeon, Mike Crowe, Joe Jussaume, Dan Hanlon, Jessica Lander, Roberta Fillmore, and Debbie Costello. Jamie McCabe and Chris Selvaggio had groups there as well. Jessica Lander helped them with last minute preparation.

Current LHS student Julian Viviescas and former LHS student Carla Duran kicked off the activities by welcoming the participating students to the State House and Civics Day.

Please remember that the presentation teams represent a combination of the work of their classes, their teachers, and the GC staff, which has helped us throughout the year. If you see any of our student community civics activists, please congratulate them for a job well done. Everyone one of our groups was commended by onlookers for their professionalism and quality of their knowledge and presentation.