



# HIGH SCHOOL VOTER PROJECT

A peer-to-peer youth voter engagement program at  
the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA

SINCE 2020

Barbara and Edward Netter Center for Community Partnerships  
University of Pennsylvania

# ABOUT US



The High School Voter Project is a nonpartisan program at the University of Pennsylvania Netter Center for Community Partnerships focused on youth voter registration, civic engagement, and civic education.

During the school year we facilitate peer-to-peer voter registration drives and voter education drop-ins at Philadelphia high schools. We run after school clubs that also include organizing meetings with legislators, advocacy work, and professional development.

Each summer, we run a program called Civic Engagement Summer where we hire a cohort of 6-10 high school students through the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) to work on youth voter engagement efforts.

PYN interns learn about voter registration and youth civic engagement and then put their learning into action by planning and running their own peer-to-peer voter registration drives. They conduct Youth Participatory Action Research and develop recommendations to share with city and state legislators on topics of their choice.





# OUR CURRICULUM



Guiding question: How can I make an impact on my community as a youth activist?

## Learning Goals

- **Voting Knowledge:** Students will become experts in voting--its history, the logistics, and its significance--and will be able to articulate why voting matters in their communities. By mastering this knowledge, students will be able to share their expertise with their peers. This looks like:
  - Students know everything about voting from registration through election day.
  - Students understand voting in the context of historical disenfranchisement and voter rights.
  - Students understand why voting is important and how it impacts people and communities.
  - Students understand the significance of their vote at a federal, state, and local level.
  - Students are registered to vote or plan to register when eligible.
  - Students vote on every election day or plan to when eligible.
  - Students keep up with current events and follow best practices to research policy issues and candidates through credible sources.
- **Changemaker Mindset:** Students will believe in the importance of using their power as citizens to become active participants in their communities. By becoming civically engaged, students will embrace their role as changemakers in their communities.
  - Students adopt a civic mindset.
  - Students know how to register someone else to vote.
  - Students can persuade other students that their vote matters and that they should register.
  - Students can organize a drive to register other students to vote.
  - Students can set up meetings with legislators.

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- **Community Organizing:** Students will master the tools of grassroots community organizing and will build coalitions with local institutions and organizations to get out the youth vote. By developing their capacities as organizers, students will build transferable skills to make lasting, sustainable change in their communities.
  - Students understand the systems and structures at the local, state, and federal level through which they can make change.
  - Students can extrapolate and apply organizing tools from voter registration and their research to social impact issues they care about.
  - Students believe that they can impact a community or political issue on a local scale by using these organizing skills.

## Curriculum Overview

Topic	Goal
Voting 101	Students will learn the history and significance of voting in the United States and will use this knowledge to articulate their own reason for why they vote and why others should, as well. Equipped with this knowledge, students will learn how to vote and will be prepared to exercise their right effectively.
Voter Registration Organizing	Students will learn the basics of voter registration and community organizing and will apply their knowledge to become voter registration organizers. Students will be prepared to lead voter registration drives in their communities.
Local, State and Federal Government	Students will learn about the different levels of government and the local, state, and federal offices they are voting for. Equipped with this knowledge, students will understand the impact of their vote and be prepared to hold elected officials accountable to their constituents.

# OUR CURRICULUM



Media Literacy	Students will learn how to identify fake news, understand different news sources, including bias and credibility, and engage in meaningful conversations with loved ones about the impact of proliferating fake news stories.
Research & Advocacy	Students will choose a social issue important to them. Students will apply best practices from the media literacy workshops as they research more about this topic. Students will be prepared to give presentations, organize events, and meet with legislators to talk more about this issue.
Professional Development	Students will learn about various types of government careers and internship programs, as well as participate in resume building and interviewing workshops.



HIGH SCHOOL  
VOTER PROJECT

## Voting 101

Everything you need to  
know about voting in  
Pennsylvania!



@HSVoterProject

**Vote!**

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## Legislator Meetings

We have met with many legislators, including Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, Rep. Joanna McClinton, Rep. Krajewski, and Councilmember Kendra Brooks to discuss a variety of issues ranging from youth voter turnout to gun violence to education reform and more. Students select their topic, conduct research, and lead conversations with legislators.



## Voter Registration

We have 400+ voter registration / pledge to vote entries in our database. We have organized voter registration drives during classes, lunches, and in public spaces.

## Field Trips

We take field trips every semester and summer. Our students have toured the White House, the PA Capitol Building, and City Hall. We have also visited the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the Constitution Center, the State Museum of Pennsylvania, and the African American Museum in Philadelphia.

**Sample Legislator Deliverable →**





## Increasing Youth Voter Turnout

Lack of involvement in the civic process is detrimental to the American democracy. Countless politicians are elected without the approval of most voters, and the legislation they support often is not reflective of their constituents. This problem is amplified as local elections see even lower turnout than Presidential elections. With the general election approaching in November and with the changing voting laws around the country, **it is more important now than ever to implement and reinforce civic education for youth.**

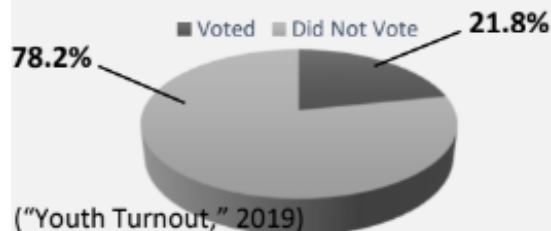


**21.29%**

Of registered Philly voters cast a ballot in the 2021 Primary

("Philadelphia Election," 2019)

### PA 18-19-Year-Old 2018 Midterm Voter Turnout



**48%**

Of PA 18-19-year-olds voted in the 2020 General Election

("Half of Youth," 2021)

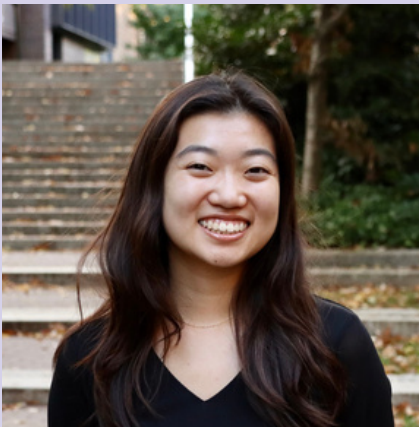
## Our Recommendations:

- Support mandatory civic education classes in middle school and high school that cover topics including the following:
  - Forms of advocacy, including meeting with legislators
  - Election process, including how to register & its importance
  - Government structure, especially at the local level
  - History of voting, activists, and voter suppression
  - Media literacy skills
- Organize events targeted for youth to talk to them about what they care about and encourage them to become familiar with the political process
- Support automatic voter registration once a student turns 18
- Support legislation that increases voting accessibility, such as eliminating long poll lines, encouraging more poll workers (especially at the youth level), and reducing barriers to voting
- Continue to oppose legislation like House Bill 1300 that increase barriers to voting

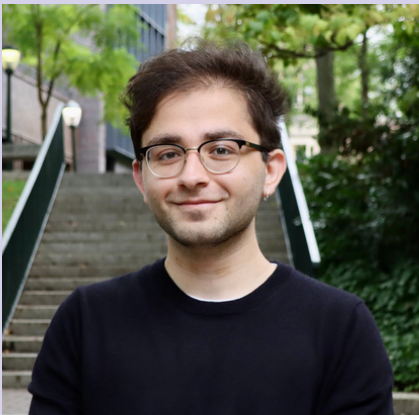
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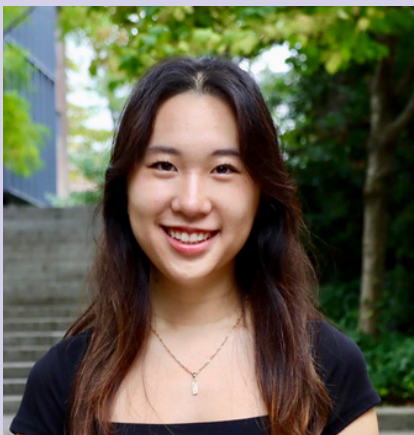
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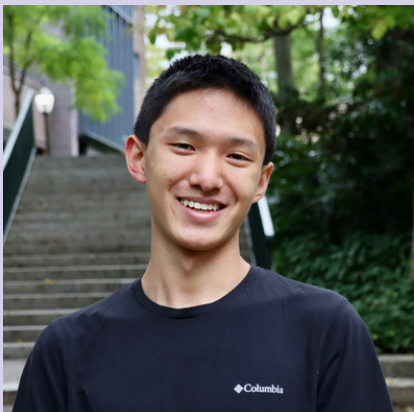
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