



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW YORK CITY KICKS OFF FIFTH ANNUAL CIVICS WEEK

NEW YORK – NYC Public Schools (NYCPS), the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit (PEU), the Civic Engagement Commission, and DemocracyNYC today kicked off the fifth annual Civics Week, a celebration of youth voice and civic empowerment, at New Dorp High School in Staten Island. Students met with city officials to learn about the importance of civic education and voting, then presented their soapbox speeches and their work on participatory budgeting and other civics projects. Chief Engagement Officer Betsy MacLean, Council Member David Carr, NYC Civic Engagement Commission Chair & Executive Director Dr. Sarah Sayeed, and Chief Democracy Officer Kathleen Daniel were all in attendance for this event.

Throughout the week, students in all grades across the city will be visited by elected officials and will participate in classroom activities and events designed to empower them to create change as active participants in their community.

“Our city’s young people have the power to change the world by sharing their voices and experiences. Our democracy is only as strong as our citizens are active and engaged, and our public schools are a critical part of building the citizens of tomorrow,” **said Schools Chancellor David C. Banks**. “Civics Week provides our students with an opportunity to explore engage face-to-face with the leaders of our city, explore careers in public service, and further develop their place in our democracy.”

“It’s never too early for our kids to learn the power of their voice to build the city they dream of,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “I’m so excited that students across New York City are celebrating our Fifth Annual Civics Week by hearing directly from our city leaders and learning the skills they’ll need to be active participants in their futures. Thank you to Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks, and all of the teachers and school staff who are working together to bring democracy into the classroom.”

"Youth involvement in civic engagement is crucial in today's society. "NYC Civics Week" allows us to prioritize the voice of the youth, as they discuss issues that mean the most to them," **said Council Member Rita Joseph**. “The school building is one of the most important places where we empower young people to be who they are and use their voice to create change.”

“I was happy to attend New Dorp High School this week and promote New York City’s Fifth Annual Civics week,” **said Council Member David Carr**. “Through civics, we hope to inspire a new generation of leaders who will shape our future and have a lasting impact on our society.”

"For the last 5 years, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit has helped organize a Student Voter Registration Drive at NYCPS High Schools during Civics Weeks to ensure thousands of students make their voices heard through active participation in our democracy," said **Acting Director Isolina De La Cruz, Mayor's Public Engagement Unit**. "We are excited to be here today at New Dorp High School, and at schools across New York City, celebrating the kick-off of Civics Week with our partners at DOE, DemocracyNYC, CEC, the Mayor's Office of Engagement, and many other agencies and organizations that are committed to civic engagement education."

"The Civic Engagement Commission is proud to partner with our city colleagues in efforts to amplify the voices of our city's youth in participatory democracy," said **Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair & Executive Director of the Civic Engagement Commission**. "We are excited to engage with students throughout this week, to hear the incredible stories and harness the energy of our youngest leaders, while empowering educators across our Public School system to facilitate youth civic participation for all."

"I am honored to participate in the incredible tradition of Civics Week to support NYC's youth as they embark upon their journey in civic engagement," said **Kathleen Daniel, Chief Democracy Officer, Democracy NYC**. "Direct conversations with students in their classrooms as they pre-register and register to vote is the first step we take towards building a culture of voting, and a lifelong commitment to civic engagement and empowerment."

"Young New Yorkers represent the best in us -- our hopes, not our fears, the stars that light the path to a brighter future," said **Betsy MacLean, NYC Chief Engagement Officer**. "Civics Week is a magical time -- when we get a glimpse of what true democracy can be -- a deep partnership between government and community. We are grateful to NYC Schools leadership, teachers, administrators and staff who work with students to demonstrate the power of civic engagement. Participation - working together with your classmates, your friends and your neighbors - is our opportunity to make the change we want to see, together."

"Civics creates a big impact on the students' life, teaching them how to speak up to use their voice in situations they think need work in our society," said **Isabella Vasquez, a seventh grader at PS/IS 266Q**. "It teaches us the importance of democracy, learning the power we have to stand up for ourselves and others. Having civics benefits me, as well as my peers and others in our school community by educating us about the purpose of advocacy and the rules of our government."

PEU, the Civic Engagement Commission, and DemocracyNYC are supporting these efforts by hosting voter registration drives in 15 schools. Additional voter registration drives are being coordinated by student ambassadors and teachers in over 185 high schools.

This year, students will be registered through PEU and student ambassador efforts. Since its inception, over 70,000 New York City students have registered to vote during Civics Week.

For students in kindergarten through eighth grade, schools will utilize resources from the Civics for All initiative of NYCPS to help students build their civic knowledge and hone their civic engagement skills.

All schools will receive a collection of curricular resources and other materials to use in their classrooms to promote civic learning, including lesson plans on the importance of civic engagement and voting, classroom materials to promote excitement about civic participation, and three new comic books from the made-for-NYCPS Civics for All Comics Group collection – *Action Activists #3*, *Barrier Breaker*, and *Recognized #2*.

Elementary schools will receive access to the NYCPS Civics Week digital resource collection, copies of *Action Activists #3*, and “My Voice Matters” stickers. In addition to this set of materials, middle schools will also receive copies of *Barrier Breaker*, which tells the story of Jackie Robinson’s fight for civil rights and his legacy beyond baseball.

High schools will receive voter registration forms, copies of *Recognized #2* and *Barrier Breaker* comics, photo booth props, and “My Voice Matters” stickers. They will also receive access to our Civics Week digital resource collection.

Continuing upon NYC Public School’s commitment to culturally responsive education, over 100 educators will participate in professional development workshops to understand ways to engage students in history and civics using comics and other graphic text. In the spirit of the newly released *Barrier Breaker* book, Citi Field will be hosting this professional development event.

Photos of these events will be available throughout the week through the link below.

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Contact: Chancellor’s Press Office press@schools.nyc.gov

Photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/196938987@N02/albums/72177720306506692>

Video of Classroom Materials: [Civics Week Unboxing](#)