

State Seal of Civic Engagement



Student Self-Reflection Prompts



Below are the guiding questions for students to respond to (in written, oral, digital, multimedia, and/or other formats) to describe and reflect on their civic engagement project(s) and/or activities:

1) INQUIRY: What problem(s)/issue(s) are you trying to address through the civic engagement project(s)/activities? Why is this meaningful to you? How do/did you intend to make a positive difference in your immediate community?

Through my position as an ambassador for the State Seal of Civic Engagement, I was able to address the sentiments of apathy among my peers. Oftentimes, it is easy to feel hopeless and insignificant as a teenager when it comes to addressing problems in our community. Young adults are kept out of the loop during major decisions that ultimately concern our generation. By outreaching for the State Seal of Civic Engagement, I conveyed to my peers that their efforts—regarding whatever issue they deem important in their community—are validated and recognized. This reinforces the sentiment that engagement from young adults is both needed and necessary. Mobilizing grassroots movements by allowing young adults to take action ultimately appeals to the constitutional principle of popular sovereignty.

2) INVESTIGATION: What actions/activities did you take on? How did you investigate the root causes of the problem(s) using different lenses? What new insights did you gain?

I joined this initiative slightly later than my peers, but one of the main reasons I joined was because of the incentive the State Seal provides. I wanted my fellow classmates to be aware of the same opportunity. My main actions in this initiative were to outreach in my community and engage in discussions regarding the criteria of the seal itself. After discussions with fellow ambassadors, I gained insight into what may be feasible for young adults. I offered my own perspectives and brainstormed with coordinators about the ways the application will be doable for all eligible students given the unique circumstances of returning to in-person learning.

3) DISCOURSE: How did you engage with others to understand multiple perspectives? What were your conclusions? What additional insights did you gain?

Throughout the process, I was able to recognize my own personal biases and the opportunities that I have access to due to the programs I am a part of. As a pace student at John F. Kennedy high school, I have been exposed to opportunities, field trips, scholarships, and college prep resources reserved for only those in the pace community. Though I had not acknowledged that until this year, I became aware of the privileges and opportunities are given to me. When it came to outreaching the State Seal at my school, I had not considered the limited accessibility of opportunities at my school. It was through discussions that I was offered different perspectives, and I realized how important it is for all students in my class to know of and be able to apply for this opportunity. I reached the conclusion that I cannot lead with partiality and that equitable access is incredibly necessary for an educational setting.

4) INFORMED ACTION: What informed action did you take on to build awareness of the issue(s) and/or your conclusion(s)? How did you engage with your community, institutional decision-makers, and/or governing entities (including other avenues to influence change, such as protests, consumer boycotting, etc.)?

I spent hours conducting research on the background and the process of the SSCE application. I consulted with my fellow ambassadors and the coordinator and asked for guidance and other questions as to how I could outreach. I asked for presentation slides and prepared a concise yet thorough presentation about the seal. I collaborated with the site lead at my school and delivered 6–10-minute informational speeches at every Government class at my school so that all seniors are aware of this opportunity. I answered questions to the best of my ability and knowledge and distributed flyers. Since that, I have been assisting my peers with their applications since, answering questions when I can, as well as guiding them to resources.

5) REFLECTION: What did you learn about yourself, the community, and how power dynamics in our society work? What civic knowledge/skills did you apply and/or master? Which ones will you continue to work on? (See [student self-assessments of civic competencies](#) for ideas.) How did your efforts impact the community or the common good (or not)? What else could you (or someone else) have done, or could continue to do, to create deeper or more lasting change? How did you personally grow through the project/activity (sample framing: “I used to think ..., now I think...”)?

I have learned that young adults tend to be apathetic since they are often left out of the conversation. This bolsters the discouragement when it comes to starting an initiative. The efforts are often left unnoticed which leads to them believing that anything they do is meaningless. The State Seal serves as a tool that recognizes the impact and one's efforts towards working on something they care about. The power dynamic in my community must shift to those the problems most concern—the youth. Through my efforts, I hope that someone is unafraid to address problems in their community, takes risks, and continues to engage in efforts, regardless of the scope of the issue. I used to think that opportunities should be kept to those who seek them, but now I realize that they should be open to all—and shared because we work better as a group and a community, where we can provide support for one another and offer resources. Grassroots projects allow us to find common ground, work together on an issue, have meaningful discussions, and create a stronger dynamic against problems that already or will eventually affect our generation.