**Dr Marc Pruyn (Marc):** Thank you so much for joining us today, colleagues. The question I'd like to start with is, how do you encourage student engagement in learning civics and citizenship content?

**Nicole Scott (Nicole):** Basically, civics and citizenship by its very nature is about being engaged. It's about being active, it's about being hands on. The students I teach are older secondary students, and so they learn about rights and freedoms. And it's about getting to think how they can incorporate that into their learning. So looking at Indigenous culture, looking at Indigenous rights, and trying to fight for them themselves because we've still got a long way to go. And encouraging them to find out their local MP and contact their local MP about what they think could be changed in their local area. It's about encouraging them to be active in both their school communities and local communities. So by being active, promoting what they've learnt about civics, being a good citizen, and the things that they are passionate about and passing that onto their students, as well as finding out who they can contact in the wider community to try and take action, whether it's about the environment, whether it's about Indigenous rights, whether it's about women. I try and get alumni from our school to speak to the students. Those that have been, I'm at a girls school, so those successful women at the school, to talk about what they've done in leadership and being active citizens since they've left the school community. And I get those people to talk to the students. Our school offers a lot of student led committees, and the students are encouraged to join the committees through a democratic voting process. And so each year level votes for their own leaders in the committees. And it makes the students, what they're learning in their humanities classes, it allows them to apply that to their school community and then the wider community. I always introduce current affairs so that whatever's going on outside, how does that apply to what we're learning now? How does that apply to what you want to do in the world? What you might want to change? So looking at local, national, and then maybe international.

**Adam Brodie-McKenzie (Adam):** Yeah, I think a really good first instance is just to get it to start with them and just to get it to start with the students. We're really lucky in civics and citizenship, that it is about all of us as citizens and young people are very much included in that.

**Evonne:** Student voice and agency affects our classroom in multiple ways in terms of giving us a voice, in guiding how we learn, and what we get to learn about. I think it's really important because this fundamentally shapes students' curiosity and interest in learning and allows them to be able to actually have a say in learning about the world around us and learning about what's important and what's relevant to our generation, and how that's going to impact on our own futures.

**Aakriti:** I think having student voice and agency in a school really makes students feel empowered, in that we know that we can not only discuss our concerns with our school, but that our school will hear us and listen to us and take that a step further.

**Marc:** What type of civics and citizenship content has resonated most with them in terms of specifics? What really gets them engaged, do you reckon?

**Nicole:** I think the thing that's most important to them is the influence of the media. And what the media is doing, how they're distorting information, and that not everything they read is necessarily, well, it needs to be questioned, put it that way. So I think that's really, really important to our students. I like to encourage students, actually, if we get a chance, to make their own political party about something they're passionate about, and promote like form their own political party, form their own campaign, and then present it to the class. And then the class votes on what they thought was the best political campaign, and what issue should be followed further. And then even potentially taking that issue to school leadership because perhaps they could form a committee that doesn't yet exist at the school.

**Ahelee:** A few years ago, I realised that there wasn't much space or platform for students my age to discuss politics. We're all really interested in social issues like climate change or consent, but there aren't many platforms or avenues for us to discuss political discourse or discuss what it means to be a citizen. So I decided to take the initiative, or the agency, to approach my school and ask for support in starting a politics and citizenship society. It's been two years now, we have about 50 members, which I think is pretty good. And we've seen this massive increase of political discourse within our school. And I think that that's such a powerful example of student voice and agency, students asking for something that they need, that they want, teachers and the school meeting them halfway and supporting them in that student voice and agency. And I think that that's something that's really powerful. In a school setting when they're taken seriously, that gives them the confidence to speak up for their needs outside of school or outside of their education. And I think that those are really important skills and traits to develop in students.

**Jasmine:** An example of student voice and agency at my school is the senior student leaders team, which is made up of Year 12 students who have the direct ability to make changes and start initiatives at our school. Through this, I learned that student voice and agency can be closely linked with leadership opportunities at school. And moreover that us students, we are more than capable of driving changes and coordinating events.

**Marc:** How do you teach for active, engaged and/or global citizenship?

**Adam:** Yeah, that's really interesting. I mean, I think one of the things like I was saying earlier about starting with the student, is that you might get different glimmers of different parts of that. So you might get the student who maybe there's some global crisis that's happening overseas and they want to fundraise for that global crisis. And so you'll lean into that. Or maybe there's something more in their local community, often to do with the environment, that doesn't seem to be going away any time soon, that desire to make the environment a better place.

**Evonne:** In the community, I feel like there are a lot of many good examples of student voice and agency, especially within my own local community. For instance, we also we have youth representative council such as VicSRC, where we act as a peak student body to represent young people in conveying their voices to ensure that the education system reflects their needs. And another example is that in many local councils they have youth committees where young people can get together into the community, and not only work on talking about the issues that affect young people in the school, but also young people outside of school because it encourages students to foster greater connection in terms of civics and citizenship outside of just a textbook or a classroom, and really allow students to engage in decision making at a local council level. And I think it's really important because through this I've seen many great things come out of it.

**Lucas:** So the local council actually has a program for Year 10 students, which it's almost like just the council but for Year 10 students so they can learn how to debate, do politics. They take stuff back to help at the schools. You can actually help with almost the regular council stuff that happens within my council. It's something that's really interesting, and it's something I'm planning to do when I get into Year 10 'cause it's an amazing opportunity to both experience and help my community.

**Nicole:** I think, again, looking at the current affairs issue, making sure students are aware of what's happening locally, nationally, internationally is very, very important. Looking at case studies of people who have taken stands on political issues, that's really important to do. Not just using our alumni, but also looking at people who are their age doing it, both nationally and internationally. Whatever we're studying I like to incorporate other perspectives from it. So whether it's Indigenous perspectives, Asian perspectives, and question the history that we're learning, like would the history you have learned 40 years ago be the same as the history you're learning now about the same event? It's great for students to question the perspectives that they're taught, and what perspectives are actually missing from their education. We have a social justice committee at our school. Every year they look at homelessness, they have a homelessness sleep-out that they organise. They use that to raise money for the homelessness. Students can either donate money or donate tins and food items. Our school is very passionate about looking after others. And so all the students from Year 7–12 are heavily involved in donating so that others might have a better life.

**Adam:** Yeah well, I mean look, I think young people, they care about fairness and that's always been a thing. And so young people will always be concerned with where they see justice. And so, I mean, I find a lot of them lend themselves towards social justice. And I think it's just important for us as civics and citizenship teachers, to grab the zeitgeist and to use that. So in terms of the engagement, I think you just sort of find where they are. And then if they're at the global or the local or what have you, sort of target those areas. I think it is always then important to, as you're suggesting though, to try to make this more holistic. So if you are starting with what's happening in your local community, of then trying to compare this with what's happening all around the world.

**Marc:** These are really good examples, colleagues. And I might follow up with Nicole. You were giving some examples of how, through the social justice committee, students were really quite engaged and demonstrating citizenship in different kinds of ways. So a sub-question or a next question is about encouraging students to demonstrate active citizenship. But it kind of seems like they're doing that already. Are there ways beyond what you've already told me where you or the students themselves encourage one another to be sort of involved in demonstrating active citizenship?

**Nicole:** One of our students, she worked in a leadership program at the local council, that they offered. And in her own, now she's an older student, so she isn't 7–10, she's a current Year 12 student, but she decided that homelessness was such an issue, through her involvement in the social justice committee, that she contacted friends and family and created 20 boxes for the homeless of her own accord, which I think is a perfect example of how students through what they've learned can take it to the next level.

**Lucas:** So with my school, we have the representative council, which I'm actually on myself, and we've made significant changes. We've helped the school accommodate for certain students.

**Ahelee:** An example of student voice and agency in the community that affects a wider group is the design of civics and citizenship resources that have been funded by VCAA and the Department of Education in Victoria. Having those resources being designed about various parts of the Civics and Citizenship curriculum, as well as student community focus groups, with all key stakeholders, whether it be students, teachers, school leaders, academics, policy makers, on how we can make the Civics and Citizenship curriculum more relevant and more engaging to the current world context and to the students who will actually be studying that curriculum. I thought that that was such a powerful example of what student voice and agency can do. It's long lasting change that will affect generations of students to come, and have started a really important discussion within our community. Through this, I learned about the importance of partnership when it comes to student voice and agency. Students are obviously the key stakeholders, and that's why it's important to hear student voice and agency, but equally teachers, school leaders, academics and policy makers, they also equally are a part of this process and listening to all views, all perspectives, and all opinions really does make for a more diverse, engaging curriculum, in this case. And this allows for better impact for the whole community.

**Aakriti:** I think student voice and agency has a massive impact in the community in, again, showing that change can happen, even at such a large level. And it also brings upon the sense of adaptability, I think, and fluidity and flexibility to a seemingly rigid structure. And it empowers the community to make change as well.

**Marc:** Our students, what do you think they connect most with in terms of what you're doing in the classroom? For example, when you share the case studies or when you encourage them to contact local MPs, do they take, and you'd mentioned, political parties and kind of putting platforms forward, do you find that your students are really excited about these sort of ways to connect ideas to the classroom, to kind of beyond the classroom?

**Nicole:** They are, but even if they don't sometimes it's nice for them to reflect on their ideas of what they'd like to tell the local MP, so that perhaps when they've left school or it's something they can discuss with their parents and what they, so just getting them to write it down isn't a wasted opportunity even if they don't take it further because it's something they can take home and discuss with their families. It's something that they might think about when they become a voter themselves. And so, you know, they might take it to their local MP, they might not, but I think it makes them better citizens once they leave school for that reason.

**Marc:** That sounds like fantastic preparation that also leaves them open for more growth as they continue in their young adult journey. Adam, how do you know when you see it? How do students demonstrate active citizenship?

**Adam:** That's a really, really, really good question. And I guess because we are doing, trying to do this in a contextual way where it is meeting students where they're at, I think that's really important that, yeah, we run these civic action projects at my school and it does need to be contextual. So for some students, that might be getting other students to sign a petition, but for others it might be even just writing almost like doing a research paper. There's a number that have been worried about sort of economic inequality and they just want to learn more. I think the way that you sort of work out if this is happening in practice is almost through enthusiasm and engagement. It is that they're showing a clear interest in their community and in their citizenship. And that doesn't even necessarily need to be a change project or making the world a better place. It can also be just linked to understanding how things work and having a sound and well rounded understanding of the way that things work. And that's a form of active citizenship as well.

**Marc:** Colleagues, thank you so much for joining us today. Your expertise in civics and citizenship, and the Victorian Curriculum and how you're applying it in your classrooms and really beyond is insightful. And we really appreciate it.

**Adam:** Thanks, thanks very much.

**Nicole:** Thank you very much for having me.

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