**Dr Marc Pruyn (Marc):** Hi colleagues, thanks for chatting with us here on this today. The overall question I have for you to begin with is, what are some of the teaching activities you've used that work well in civics and citizenship?

**Miguel Regalo (Miguel):** That's a really great question, Marc. Some of the key teaching activities that I do are grounded in experiential learning and really drawing on student voice in the classroom. So whether that involves writing your own constitution or, in small groups, forming political parties or even doing a role-play of a court case and having students play the judge, the jury, the defendants and so forth, having those activities in my classroom really helps students connect the content that they're learning with their own lives.

**Evonne:** So I think with student voice and agency, the main thing is that it allows students to be engaged in terms of learning where they're able to have a say in what they're learning and how they're taught. And I think that's extremely important because it ensures that it maintains this partnership between student and the teacher where both individuals are engaged in the learning. And they're excited to learn.

**Ahelee:** When I think of an example of student voice and agency in the classroom, I generally think of how important it is for students and teachers to have a very active, productive and supportive working relationship.

**Lucas:** What I learned is that we can actually help change our learning experience through just being open with the teacher. We can just really focus on what we need to focus on.

**Jasmine:** Student voice and agency's impact in the classroom is that it allows students and teachers to work together to come up with a method of teaching and learning that works best for both of us. And this would essentially allow for more engaged students and a more collaborative student-teacher relationship.

**Vlada Rahim (Vlada):** One of the really good activities that I've used has been discovering our identity. Getting the children to think about themselves belonging to different cultural, religious and social groups and then bringing us back together and viewing ourselves as Australians. With that activity, bringing popular children authors is also really good connection for children. So I've used the book called "I'm Australian Too" by Mem Fox. So that was really good. They could relate to some of the characters in the book and the experiences they've gone through and then recognise that together we are all connected as Australians.

**Marc:** I think connecting that to another question that we wanted to sort of have as part of this discussion is how do you make the links to students with the ideas you were talking about and actually how government functions at the LGA level or at the state or larger level, sort of the civics of it. How do you connect those two things for kids?

**Vlada:** They need to know that this is real and it's happening out there. So with students, they've got to actually research what is it out there for refugee people that is available in our community? What are the physical locations? Who are the people? Is it the local MP, or is it another service that's linked to it?

**Marc:** That really resonates. That's really interesting how you're making those connections. It also makes me think of the notion of participation as you've been saying, but, and that sort of implies democratic values and democratic participation. What kind of teaching strategies, or ways of connecting do you use to sort of link the knowledge of how government works, the democratic values behind it and then what you were talking about, the identity and belonging?

**Vlada:** So as we know, children best learn with hands-on experiences, and yes, role-playing is great, you know making models or mock interviews, all fantastic but I feel the more real we can make this, the better students understand it. So in another lesson about rules, or introducing the law-making procedures, with students, we had a look at class rules, just starting nice and small. So the students would look at a rule that they wanted to create in the classroom. For instance when they are writing, the class should be quiet. Okay. So the students then needed to look, who is impacted by that rule? Who does that rule benefit? What are the consequences when that rule is broken? So we actually then relate it to the laws that are in our country. Who are they made for? Who are they impacting and what are the consequences? So starting small and then linking it to something bigger.

**Marc:** Another area or a second area, but again, you've touched on some of these elements already is sort of asking you to describe some of the useful teaching approaches, the pedagogy that you've found helpful in teaching civics and citizenship.

**Miguel:** One of the pedagogies that I employ quite regularly in my civics and citizenship classes is inquiry-based learning and teaching, particularly through dialogue and research. On the one hand, research skills are inevitably really important civic skills in terms of interpreting news headlines, interpreting data from government or department reports in order to support one's inquiry or support one's argument. So going through the process of establishing an inquiry question, identifying stakeholders, whether they're interest groups or lobby groups, or particular members of parliament or judges who might be important in particular topics. And then finding ways of collecting data to figure out how the Australian democracy more broadly works all together. In terms of dialogue, I also use Socratic seminars and community of inquiry circles in my civics and citizenship classes to really build that collective understanding around what students think about our democracy and also how they can contribute as active citizens in the broader world.

**Marc:** How do you know that they know? How do you know if a student understands and demonstrates knowledge around civics and citizenship concepts?

**Miguel:** That's a really good question. I suppose there are two elements to my data collection as such regarding understanding and confirming students' knowledge of the concepts that we're studying. The first one ties back to really being citizens in class, not just learning about how to be a citizen. So their successful performance in creating or drafting a constitution or in writing a script for the upcoming role-play and executing that, of course including key terms and key knowledge in their role-plays for instance, really ties into living as citizens in our classroom context.

**Vlada:** It feels like civics and citizenship at primary school level is a little bit different to other subjects. It's not like a test paper that you could just give, like you said, they need to demonstrate it. So it would be more project based if I am teaching about the rules, I would be looking at how the child responds at, you know, what rule needs to be changed and what are they writing up. What is their reasoning behind it? Are they taking into consideration the information I have taught them about law making?

**Marc:** Not just studying about, but embodying and having a go at being a citizen.

**Miguel:** Definitely. And I guess that ties to the second part with my data collection, and that would have to be around, I suppose, conceiving of students' knowledge through skills. So whether that's being able to describe, to evaluate or analyse, really using a taxonomy, for this instance, Bloom's taxonomy, to judge the complexity and intricacy of students' outputs in relation to the content that we're learning.

**Marc:** What kinds of role-plays or examples do you think a teacher could use to illustrate a couple of things? And starting first with democratic decision making, or maybe how the electoral system operates? Do you have any thoughts there?

**Miguel:** That's a really good question. In terms of experiencing role-plays with regards to democratic decision making, one of the ways that I go about exploring that in my classroom is by grouping students and then assigning them different decision making processes that they then apply to a particular problem or scenario. I will assign one group more of an autocratic, one student makes all the decisions process. I'll give another group the decision making process where they all have to reach consensus in order for decisions to be made. And then perhaps for another group, they'll have the process of ensuring that only the majority, there has to be a majority of the group in order for something to be decided. So I suppose it's one of the more flexible approaches to exploring democratic decision making that can be applied, not only to this particular example but if teachers wanted to really stretch and really explore this, really seeing how it impacts collaborative learning in the classroom and then asking students to reflect on their experience in order to really understand how decisions are made in our political and legal contexts. Whether it's juries in a court case or the prime minister speaking to his Cabinet, or even just how the student council at your school goes about making decisions. By exploring these different decision making processes really taps into students' understanding and intuitions about democratic values.

**Marc:** So for example, how do you go from these larger ideas in the curriculum to how you construct your lessons? What does that look like for you?

**Miguel:** So, for instance, there is one particular project that I'm currently designing for my civics and citizenship class, looking at policies, different political parties and so forth. And so students, as part of that, will have particular lessons focused on who the major parties are and what they stand for, what their policy platform is, then who the minor parties are. And then kind of tying this thread about democratic participation that then will culminate in them forming their own political parties, having that verbose and robust debate about how best to lead our society and then implicitly learning about our electoral system by then going through the voting process themselves. So I suppose that's my approach to taking the curriculum, understanding the outcomes that are asked of us, forming inquiry questions or essential questions that then guide each particular lesson.

**Marc:** Are there any other ideas that we really haven't chatted about that we should keep there in this public learning, professional learning space? Any other thoughts or ideas that we haven't touched on yet?

**Vlada:** I think maybe it would be good for schools to be more informed of how the students can take actions. What is out there for them? If we are limited in what students can take action in, then maybe that's something that we should look at and invest in.

**Miguel:** One aspect of our practice that I would like to foreground would be to really echo many sentiments around using the real world to bring our subject area to life. There might be this perception that civics and citizenship is perhaps just facts based or bland and textbook driven, but really tapping into our rich institutions, the really colourful characters that we find in our democracy and seeing those places can help bring our content area alive in our classrooms. So making the most of excursions to Parliament House or to the courts, making the most of inviting local members of parliament to come and speak to students, to really unpack and explore what they do and how they do democracy can really be beneficial to students understanding and bridge the gap between what they're learning in class and what's happening in the world beyond.

**Marc:** Well, thank you so much colleagues for sharing your collective thoughts with us today. How you go from the abstract to the concrete, how you connect to students and really pretty expansively from my point of view cover and engage with the Victorian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship is really impressive and hopeful. And I thank you so much for being part of that today. Cheers.

**Miguel:** Thanks very much for having me.

**Vlada:** Thank you very much.

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