Los Angeles County Office of Education
Division of Curriculum and Instructional Services

CALIFORNIA DEMOCRACY SCHOOL

AWARD APPLICATION

For California Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Application and Overview
2016 - 2017

Application Deadline: March 17, 2017
Overview

Background
The California Democracy School Civic Learning Initiative is a first of its kind approach to institutionalizing civic learning for all students across entire grade levels in schools. Originally funded by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and directed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education with support from the Los Angeles County Education Foundation, the initiative originally engaged 12 high schools in Los Angeles and Orange Counties over a three-year span. All 12 successfully completed the program and were awarded California Democracy School status for institutionalizing high quality civic inquiry and investigations across one or more grade levels to empower all students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for effective life-long civic engagement.

Purpose
"The success of our nation and state depends on educated, informed and active citizens and residents… For all students in California to have access to a continuum of civic learning experiences starting in kindergarten—and to effectively respond to equity issues—we must embed robust civic learning throughout the K-12 experiences, both within and beyond school walls" (California Task Force on K–12 Civic Learning, Revitalizing K–12 Civic Learning in California: A Blueprint for Action (August 2014), pp. 6, 30. www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/cltffinalreport.pdf

The goal of the California Democracy School Award program is to recognize elementary, middle, and high schools that are providing high quality civic learning for all students as part of an integrated curricular program or stand-alone curriculum across one or more grade levels. For the purpose of this program, high quality civic learning is defined as a civic action process whereas students engage in an inquiry about a current public problem or issue, research and analyze multiple perspectives about potential causes and solutions, participate in a civil deliberation to understand different perspectives, reach an informed conclusion, and propose a public policy solution.

Award Criteria
In order to qualify for the award, schools must provide evidence for institutionalizing civic learning by having the following elements in place along with thoughtful responses to the questions below.

- **Civic Outcomes for Students** – What civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions do students acquire? How are they assessed?
- **The School Environment** – How is civic learning integrated into the curriculum or delivered as a stand-alone curriculum? How are outcomes assessed? What is the professional development plan for existing and new teachers? How does the learning environment support the program? How has civic learning impacted classroom climate and school culture?
- **School/District Sustainability** – What policies are in place to build capacity and sustain the program for the future in the areas of curriculum, professional development, and accountability?

Examples for each of these along with other resources can be found on the California Democracy School website at http://www.lacoe.edu/CaliforniaDemocracySchool

Award Process
Beginning 2016-2017, all schools across California are invited to apply for the California Democracy School Award. Once applications are received and reviewed based on the scoring rubric, schools will be contacted to prepare for a site validation visit. Schools that meet the required criteria will be recognized with a plaque and banner at the California Civic Learning Showcase to be held at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2016–2017 CALIFORNIA DEMOCRACY SCHOOL AWARD TIMELINE</th>
<th>Submit applications by mail or email by 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 1, 2017 to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Invitation to Schools</td>
<td>California Democracy School Award Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Deadline</td>
<td>c/o Michelle Herczog, Ed.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Site Validation Visits</td>
<td>Consultant III, History-Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcement of Winners</td>
<td>Los Angeles County Office of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9300 Imperial Highway, ECW 236</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Downey, CA 90242</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For more information, please contact, Michelle M. Herczog, Ed.D., Consultant III, History-Social Science, Los Angeles County Office of Education, (562) 922-6908 or Herczog_Michelle@lacoe.edu
19753416022081
County-District-School (CDS) Code – 14 digits

Los Angeles County
County Name

Redondo Beach Unified School District
District Name

Nick G. Parras Middle School
School Name  (If your school is selected, this school name will be engraved on the award plaque.)

200 N. Lucia Ave. Redondo Beach 90277
Mailing Address City Zip Code

310 798-8616 (310)798-8620
Area Code and Phone Number Ext. Area Code and Fax Number

lnygren@rbusd.org
Principal’s Email Address

I certify that I have reviewed the information contained in this application and, to the best of my knowledge, it is complete and accurate. I further certify that:

- The Office for Civil Rights does not have any outstanding findings of civil rights statute violations by the school or district that may affect the school;
- There are no pending lawsuits by the Department of Justice against the district alleging that the school, or the district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clauses; and
- The school or district is addressing or has addressed any identified areas of noncompliance under federal or state laws and regulations.

Lars Nygren
Principal’s Name Principal’s Signature 3/14/2017

Steven Keller
District Superintendent’s Name Superintendent’s Signature 03/14/2017
School Information

1. Current school enrollment: 1210

2. Percentage of Your Student Population Who are English Learners: 3%

3. Percentage of Your Student Population Who Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch: 11%

4. Which category best describes where your school is located?
   - [ ] Urban  
   - [x] Suburban  
   - [ ] Rural

5. What is your school calendar?  
   - [x] Traditional  
   - [ ] Year-round  
   - [ ] Modified

6. Is your school a charter school?  
   - [ ] Yes  
   - [x] No
If your school is selected as a nominee, the site visit team members will need directions to your school.

Los Angeles County
County

Redondo Beach Unified School District
District

Nick G. Parras Middle School
School

200 N. Lucia Ave. Redondo Beach 90277
Street Address City Zip Code

Dr. Lars Nygren 310 798-8616
Principal (Area Code) Phone Number Ext.

Los Angeles International Airport
Name and Location of the Nearest Airport

405 Freeway
Major Freeway Access

Provide detailed travel directions indicating the surface streets that lead to your school and directions for parking. Please do not submit directions or a map generated by an Internet website.

If coming from Los Angeles or LAX, take the 405 South. Get off on Inglewood Ave. and make a right or go south. Make a right or go west on Inglewood Avenue. Make a left or go south on Prospect Ave. Make a right or go west on Diamond St. Make a left or go south on Lucia Ave. Parras Middle School is on the left side of Lucia. The parking lot is in the front of the school. Check in at the office.
Part 1: Civic Outcomes for Students

What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do students acquire? How are they assessed?
Response limited to this page.

Through eighth grade social studies classes, Parras Middle School students learn the tenants of democracy and citizenry, with an inclusive emphasis of diverse points of view. Students are challenged to think beyond the facts and determine not only what is said, but why the Constitution and the actions of our Founding Fathers and Mothers means and matters today. Through individual and team investigations of past and current events, students experience a 3-D, surround-sound view of history. Scholars are challenged to dive deeper as they investigate past and present legislation, letters, speeches and commentary about issues ranging from homelessness to how to care for our nation’s neglected veterans. Students are challenged to consider, on a daily basis, “What does it mean to be an American?” and “What is our responsibility to ensure this is an America of the people, by the people and for the people?” At Parras, we nurture complex thinking, writing and discussion that permeates through the walls of all our classes, especially 8th grade language arts where students are inspired to make connections with the “real world” through Democracy In Action: Parras Middle School 8th Graders Step-Up and Take Action. This teacher-inspired, year-long curriculum offers students close and wide angle perspectives of how American democracy works. Now in its 12th year, Democracy In Action has evolved over the years according to student needs and societal concerns. But the essence of our focus and approach has remained the same:

1. Fortify analytical reading, writing, speaking and research skills in language arts and social studies classes through study of targeted texts about Americans who have both faced and overcome obstacles.
2. Connect selected data, letters, legislation, fiction, poetry, memoirs and expository text to today’s current events with credible news articles and opinion pieces. Assessments include portfolios documenting long-term growth, performance-based team presentations (incorporating technology and The Arts), essays and summative tests.
3. Following extensive research, students select topics they feel passionate about: Their research continues throughout the year. Students become strong persuasive writers, drafting opinion pieces and letters which they send to experts around the world; they conduct interviews with key politicians/specialists; students create multimedia campaigns using film and social media to share their knowledge with the public.
4. Students learn communication techniques and are assessed (using student/teacher created rubrics) about their knowledge, and inclusion of, persuasive devices such as bandwagon and testimonial.
5. Culminating a yearlong investigation, students raise money, volunteer and participate in ongoing non-profit efforts to educate the public about their various topics. In addition, they present their findings to public forums including the City Council, churches and synagogues.
6. Students’ final formal assessment projects have morphed over the years from a DIA Conference attended by more than 1,000 participants to a DIA Concert for Change to 2017’s DIA Creating the World We Want to Live In Film Festival. Parras teachers continually strive to inspire students to be formidable Agents of Change. By the time they leave our campus they know that democracy is an ACTION word.

Because students stick with a topic throughout the year, learning about the 5 Ws Facts as well as the human stories of those impacted by the problem and individuals working to effect change, our students’ dispositions change: By the end of the school year, our 13- and 14-year olds have morphed into caring, focused and driven citizens who willingly work beyond a teacher’s expectations. Why? Because they get hooked on the power of giving.
Describe the Program:
More than 12 years ago veteran teacher Janet Barker noticed a cloud of apathy shrouding their eighth grade language arts students. Indeed, when conferring with social studies colleagues, a lack of civic engagement seemed to extend its atrophic limbs across both content areas. Inspired by the Civil Rights era and Barker’s work with the Center for the Preservation of Democracy and the Japanese American Museum Education Division, teachers put their heads together and came up with Democracy In Action. DIA is more than a curriculum: It is a giant oak that transcends educational trends and presidential politics, rooting back to the Bill of Rights.

DIA is a story with chapters woven throughout the school year. Instruction starts in August as students how to analyze diverse and selective texts such as “The Treasure of Lemon Brown” by Walter Dean Myers, a story about a homeless man and teenager. Like traditional language arts classrooms, students learn about literary technique and reading strategies, but the lesson goes beyond the textbook to what's happening today. Students learn to evaluate reliable sources vs. fake news sources and politically motivated or profit-seeking authors and organizations. Discoveries leap off the page: Students build miniature model homes and determine the qualities of positive families and speculate about what happens to individuals when one’s foundation isn’t secure. They question the role of government: Ally or foe? All the while, our classroom environment transforms into laboratories of change and innovation, a refuge where collaborative teams replace individualistic rows of desks. So too, with teachers: As we become more vulnerable and honest about our challenges and successes, during quarterly District PDs, weekly team meetings, and over lunch and email conversations, we swap effective strategies and newly discovered tricks of the trade. At Parras, we strive to foster growth in our students and those who teach them. To make sure our targets are met, student growth is evaluated in a variety of ways, from written reflections to team-building and project-based assessments. Parents are an essential member of the learning team: Teachers continuously communicate via phone, email, PTSA newsletters, phone blasts, and written correspondences, such as the DIA Chapter Alerts.

DIA challenges students to constantly refocus their lens to the past, present to future. As a part of DIA, students interview influential older family members and neighbors and write 300-word narratives that they read aloud during “The Legacy Project Reception” which transforms them into energized, powerful speakers and leaders. Going public is critical component of DIA. What did we learn? Why does it matter? Students write letters and interview influential political figures ranging from Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor (who responded) to First Lady Michelle Obama (who agreed to a phone interview) to impressing one of the nation's most respected neurosurgeons, Boston University's Dr. Robert Cantu, so much that he recently invited a student to the March 10th Scripps Medical Conference. Throughout the year students stay current about their topics, annotating weekly newspaper articles. When proficient, they work with a like-minded team wage multimedia public awareness campaigns. Following the stepping up component of DIA, students take action through volunteerism and fund-raising. Over the years, DIA has garnered favorable attention from influential public figures and the media. To whom much is given, much is expected. In one short school year, our students learn how to be effective and powerful citizens. Instead of focusing the camera on their selfie selves, our students shine the light on people-and topics-deserving of attention. For a dozen years, under the tutelage of inspired teachers, DIA has challenged students to step up, take action and create the world we all aspire to live in.
Part 3: School/District Sustainability

Describe the policies in place to ensure that high quality civic learning is provided to all students across one or more grade levels, addressed in the elements below (i.e. School Level Plan, Local Control Accountability Plan). Limit response to 3 pages.

Parras’ Mission Statement agreed upon by all staff members and posted on our webpage for the public to view states that we strive: “To ensure continual growth in our students’ learning and academic achievement while promoting responsible citizenship.” All stakeholders are invested in making sure that we do everything possible to foster citizenry at all grade levels. For example, in advisement class, students read school wide news articles and discuss the content of current event topics and are encouraged to extend those conversations to home. We promote critical thinking and analysis at all grade levels and subjects. Teachers and students volunteer their time and participate in the County’s Mock Trial competition. Regarding civic activism and leadership, we are particularly proud of our Parras Middle School teacher-generated Democracy In Action: 8th Graders Step Up and Take Action. Driven by content and educator commitment, students learn how to be effective members of American society through careful study and activism and why continual involvement is necessary to a thriving democracy. DIA was introduced at the CTA’s Good Teaching Conference several years ago and has been positively acknowledged at the state and local level. Endorsed by parents and community leaders like, DIA is recognized as one of the finest civic engagement projects in a public school setting. Teachers collaborate four times throughout the year at a District-funded PD. In addition, they are provided weekly opportunities to meet, in addition to half day PDs spread throughout the school year. This collaboration has led to revisions and adaptations that ensure the curriculum aligns closely to both 8th grade social studies and language arts standards. In addition, the collaborative time has led to assessments that challenge students’ critical thinking skills. Project Based Learning assessments evaluate School to Career skills such as collaboration, revision, self-reflection and ownership of the process and end product. Recently, we were able to secure funding that afforded us to send all eighth-graders to spend an informative day at The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The field trip tied into a quarter-long investigation of the life and times of Anne Frank and the continuous study of tolerance and discrimination. Our teachers recently applied for, and won, a $4,500 RBEF Grant to purchase technology that supports video story telling in connection with the upcoming DIA: Creating the World We Want to Live In Film Festival. Our District reported the teachers’ efforts so much they added addition financial support to the technology purchase. DIA has evolved over the years, as previously stated. As teachers continuously consider the effectiveness of various elements of the curriculum, as well as the expertise of educators involved, new approaches are added as others are tossed out. For example, after years of hosting a DIA conference complete with speakers, booths, promotional items and fund-raising, teachers determined that too much time and effort was placed on the end product or show vs. the process. Two years students were particularly musical and theatrical so that teachers designed a Voices of Transformation and a Concert for Change. Working with the Los Angeles Music Center and supported by School Site Council funds, students learned how to use The Arts to be persuasive and heartfelt communicators. This year, students will compete to share their films in our first ever Film Festival March 19 in which the public will be invited to attend. Ever changing, DIA becomes increasingly relevant to today’s world.
2016-2017 California Democracy School Award Scoring Rubric

Reader's Name: __________  County: ____  District: ____  School: ____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Civic Outcomes for Students – The reviewer has a clear and complete understanding of the civic outcomes described below.</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Approaching</th>
<th>Incomplete</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Civic Knowledge - Description of civic knowledge acquired by students, as identified in the California History-Social Science Standards and Framework including the structure of government and the role and responsibilities of government and citizens to address current public problems and issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Skills - Description of cognitive and civic participatory skills acquired by students, as identified in the California History-Social Science Standards and Framework including analysis of different perspectives, effective use of deliberative processes in speaking and listening, reaching consensus, and working collaboratively with others.</td>
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<td>c. Dispositions - Description of students’ concern for others’ rights and welfare, commitment toward promoting fairness and trust, and appreciation of public duty and civic responsibility (e.g., volunteering, voting in elections, participating in community meetings, communicating with elected and appointed officials).</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Assessment – Description of mechanisms for assessing students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions (i.e., Senior project, classroom-based formative and summative tasks, portfolios, capstone projects, performance-based assessments).</td>
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2. **School Environment** - Reviewer has a clear/complete understanding of programming in place in the following areas.

   **e. Curriculum** – A clear description of the curriculum is provided with strategies for students with different learning needs (i.e. English Learners, students with learning challenges, struggling readers) to engage in high quality civic learning.

   **f. Assessment** – A clear description of the assessment system to determine if students have mastered civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions (i.e. classroom-based formative and summative tasks, portfolios, capstone projects, performance-based assessment).

   **g. Professional Development** – A clear description of the type, frequency, content, and delivery system of professional development is provided.

   **h. Learning Environment** – A clear description of the physical environment of the classroom/school space and dedicated time and space for teachers to collaborate for planning, reflection and revising instruction.

   **i. Home/Community Communication** – A clear description of the communications plan to families and community members to further understanding, build capacity, and support.

3. **School/District Sustainability** – Reviewer has a clear/complete understanding of policies that have been adopted to ensure that high quality civic learning is provided to all students across one or more grade levels in the following areas. Policy examples include...
PARRAS MIDDLE SCHOOL

School Level Plans, Local Control Accountability Plan, and school board policies.

j. **Curriculum** – A curriculum has been adopted for a stand-alone course or integrated within an existing course(s) (e.g., science, history-social science, English Language Arts).

k. **Professional Development** – Policy and resources are dedicated to provide civic learning professional development for teachers.

l. **Accountability** – Policy is adopted to ensure that civic learning is a required component of the educational program for students (e.g., Senior project, classroom-based formative and summative tasks, portfolios, capstone projects, graduation requirement).

m. **School Community Support** – Structures and systems are in place to engage families and community members for building capacity and sustaining programming.

Total points awarded:

___  ___  ___  ___