A blue-tinted photograph of a diverse group of young people at a protest or rally. They are holding signs, one of which is partially visible with the words "se Pu".

Dem
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is a
Verb.

**Mikva
Challenge**

mikvachallenge.org



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Our Mission

Mikva Challenge develops youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

Mikva Challenge knows that democracy is people taking action — speaking, engaging, learning, listening. We clear a path for young people to be involved now, and to develop confidence and habits that will serve them — and the world we share — all their lives.

Mikva alumni are three times more likely to vote than their millennial peers and twice as likely to participate in community service. Alumni have increased confidence as public speakers and stronger belief in their responsibility for solving community issues. Additionally, teachers who use Mikva curricula in their classrooms report recapturing their passion for teaching.

→ To date **250,000+** students have participated in Mikva Challenge programs in 22 cities/counties throughout the country. Tens of thousands more are impacted by our curricula nationwide.

100,000

Students nationwide participate in Mikva programs each year.

957

Teachers have received professional development in Action Civics to increase student engagement in the classroom.

97%

Of teachers in Mikva programs report that using Mikva curricula increased their students civic knowledge.

Our History

Mikva Challenge was founded on the premise that youth voice and participation matter, and that our civic and political life will be stronger when youth participate and help shape their own destinies.

In 1997, Mikva was founded as a tribute to former Judge, U.S. Congressman and White House Counsel, Abner Mikva, and his wife, Zoe, a teacher and lifelong education activist. The goal: to open up democratic spaces for youth living in under-resourced neighborhoods and politically marginalized communities.

A small pilot program at first — with an all-volunteer staff running an electoral engagement project in four schools — today Mikva has expanded nationally. Three chapters in California, Illinois, and Washington, DC serve as Mikva model sites and innovation hubs, while partnership sites nationwide provide curricula, training, and strategic support to school districts across the country.

For a more detailed timeline of Mikva Challenge's history, visit: mikvachallenge.org/about-us/history

“I didn’t think my voice mattered. Through Mikva, I learned that one person can make a difference.”

— Mikva Challenge alum



Our Pledge

We clear a path for young people to use their voices and discover a passion for serving their communities.

Our Mission: to develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

Our Vision: a stronger, inclusive democracy that values youth voice.

We Believe

- By intentionally reaching out to under-resourced communities and schools, we create opportunities for youth to elevate the issues that are important to them and their community.
- Policymakers make better decisions when youth voice is included in decision-making.
- Community involvement is an essential experience for young people to have a voice in their future.
- By remaining non-partisan, we make space for young people to form their own opinions and choose the candidates and issues they want to support.

Hear from the students whose lives have been changed by Mikva Challenge: mikvachallenge.org/our-work/reflections

“What I say and do makes a difference.”

— Mikva Challenge student



Theory of Change

Mikva Challenge's work not only makes a real impact on teens now, but also seeds a generation of thoughtful, engaged, ethical citizens and community leaders for the future.

Creating bridges between youth and adults allows them to form interpersonal connections and make civic decisions together.

1. We provide:

Opportunity We provide youth with the opportunities needed in order to participate in civics.

Support We provide teachers with Action Civics curriculum materials and professional development.

Connections We provide opportunities for youth to form interpersonal connections with adult leaders.

2. We will see:

Knowledge We will see the development of civic knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

Engagement We will see more youth engaged in civic partnerships with adults.

Transformation We will see more youth participate in civic processes, along with teachers and adults better trained to promote it in their institutions.

3. This leads to:

Empowerment This leads to empowered, informed, and active youth who promote a just and equitable society.

Skill This leads to teachers with the knowledge and confidence to implement youth-centered pedagogy and civics curricula.

Inclusion This leads to adults who include youth in civic processes.

For detailed case studies and research papers, visit: mikvachallenge.org/white-papers

A stronger, inclusive democracy that values youth voice.

Programs

Mikva Challenge involves young people in civic engagement through hands-on, project-based learning that deeply transforms students' civic attitudes, skills, and sense of agency. Mikva's key areas of programming:

- **Action Civics Classrooms**

Mikva Challenge offers a portfolio of Action Civics curricula designed for educators and youth workers to use in developing youth voice and guiding youth to take informed action. Our curricula are designed by and for educators to pick and adapt lessons that best suit their context and the needs of their students.

- **Project Soapbox**

Project Soapbox is a public speaking competition facilitated by Mikva Challenge that calls young people to speak out on issues that affect them and their communities. These powerful speeches have lasting, transformative impacts on classrooms, schools, and communities.

- **Elections & Campaign Experiences**

Through hands-on campaign work and interactions with candidates and elected officials, Mikva's Elections in Action programs empower young people to become informed about and engaged in elections – even before they are old enough to vote.

- **Youth-led Advocacy**

Youth are given a seat at the table with city and school leaders who make public policy. Programs include participation in citywide youth councils, student voice committees, and mentoring opportunities.

For more information on Mikva's programs, visit: mikvachallenge.org/our-work/programs



Impacts: Mikva Challenge Action Civics Programs

1. Increase student engagement and retention

By activating youth voice, and engaging students through project-based learning, Action Civics can produce a positive impact on school retention and college graduation.

81%

of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if they received more experiential learning.

"I used to feel like I just attended this school, now I feel it is my school!" — Student

2. Develop student skills, knowledge and dispositions

81%

of students can make a strong argument for a candidate they support compared with 28% before the program.

90%

of students are confident working with a group of peers to solve a community issue compared with 52% before the program.

87%

of students are confident in their research skills through interviewing experts, surveying peers, and examining secondary sources compared with 53% before the program.

3. Prepare students to be successful beyond high school

Mikva alumni are more likely to graduate high school and attend college than their peers.

81%

of students plan to make a difference in their community in the future compared with 48% before the program.

The organizational skills that are taught through Mikva programs are skills that many college students do not have going into their first year of school. — Alumni

4. Improve teacher pedagogy and practice

80%+

of teachers involved in Mikva said that their participation had improved their teaching practice and helped them create a more student-centered learning environment.

Mikva changed how I teach and, consequently, made what I do in the classroom meaningful and relevant. — Teacher

Mikva helped me bring passion to the classroom. I have developed so many activities and projects that are student-centered because of the curriculum and professional development. — Teacher



Get in touch to get involved.

Together, we can help young people lead our democracy today.

Become a Mikva Partner

To learn more about your city or district becoming a Mikva Partner Site, visit:

mikvachallenge.org/locations/partner-sites

Explore Mikva's Teacher Resources

To learn more about receiving training or curricula from Mikva, visit:

mikvachallenge.org/teacher-resources

Dive Deeper

To learn more about our impacts and process, visit:

mikvachallenge.org/our-work

Be a Donor

Ready to make a difference? Visit:

mikvachallenge.org/get-involved/donate

“Listening and working with Mikva youth leaders has helped me implement policies and programs that truly center youth needs.”

Downloads

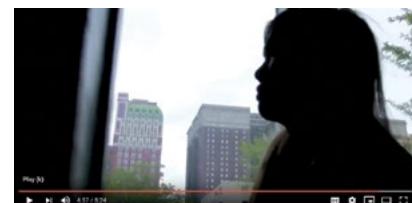
Photos

The Mikva Challenge story is best told through imagery. If you would like to use one of our photos, please submit your request to: inquiries@mikvachallenge.org.



Video

The easiest way to share our videos is to link directly from our YouTube channel: [@mikvachallenge.](https://www.youtube.com/@mikvachallenge)



Media

To see our most recent media hits, visit: mikvachallenge.org/media.

Fact sheets

To see our most recent fact sheets online, visit: mikvachallenge.org/fact-sheets.

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