# The Center for Citizenship and Social Responsibility (CCSR)

# Youth Empowerment Program

Public education has historically focused on academic achievement and assessing learning through standardized tests. Student learning time is filled with a content-based curriculum with many required courses, severely limiting learning activities that enhance social-emotional learning, leadership, and youth empowerment. As an after-school program, the CCSR provides youth (students) the opportunity to attain these learning outcomes.

## Mission

The primary mission of the CCSR is to develop student leaders/social entrepreneurs who will be positive contributors to society and will work to combat critical social issues such as global warming, addiction, prejudice, bullying, racism, pollution, gender bias, poverty, public education, and health care. The CCSR provides learning experiences that enhance empathy, compassion, and leadership skills. Through engagement and processing, students are actively involved in developing and implementing local and global projects that address their concerns.

## Curriculum

There are two keys to learning: engagement and processing. Engagement refers to providing a learning experience that has meaning and interest for the student. The role of the advisor/teacher is to design a learning plan that engages students. Processing is the learning activity that requires students to address a social issue by creating a project. The following are the methodologies that are the foundation of the CCSR program.

### Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PBL) is an effective teaching method that allows students to apply the skills and knowledge they learn to real-world problems and projects. This approach helps

students develop a deeper understanding of social issues by actively engaging with them and connecting to their experiences. Additionally, project-based learning encourages students to take ownership of their learning by allowing them to direct their projects, which can increase their motivation and engagement. Research suggests that group or team projects can improve learning outcomes. In group projects, students can collaborate and share ideas, leading to a deeper understanding of the material and enhanced critical thinking skills. The projects provide students with experience working in a team, an essential skill often valued in the workforce. Group projects can also increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process. Research shows active, social, contextual, engaging, and student-owned educational experiences lead to deeper learning. The benefits of working in a group setting include the development of higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills. 2] Creates a learning community that values diversity and provides emotional support. 3] Develop leadership skills – teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and planning. 4] Enhances self-esteem and self-confidence

Positive effects of PBL

- Working to solve a social problem can provide individuals with a sense of purpose and meaning as they work towards a goal that they believe will positively impact society.
- Empowerment: Creating a solution can also empower individuals as they actively take steps to address an issue they care about.
- Increased self-esteem: Successfully solving a social problem can boost self-esteem and self-worth, as individuals feel they have made a meaningful contribution.
- Increased motivation: Creating a solution can also improve motivation as individuals work towards a goal they are passionate about.
- Decrease in stress: When an individual actively works towards a solution to a social problem, they can feel a sense of agency and control, decreasing anxiety.
- Positive impact on mental health: The positive emotions and sense of accomplishment associated with creating a solution can also positively affect mental health.

- Positive impact on the community: The solution to a social problem can have a positive effect on the community, as it can lead to the creation of new resources, the improvement of infrastructure, or the implementation of positive changes.
- Social connections: Collaborating with others to solve a social problem can foster social relationships and lead to new opportunities for collaboration and support.

**Authentic Learning**

*Authentic learning (or active learning) is, "real life learning. It is a style of learning that encourages students to create a tangible, useful, quality product/outcome to be shared with their world."*

*Connecting what instructors teach to real-world issues and problems is at the core of authentic learning. In other words, authentic learning requires students to engage in meaningful activities and actively think about what it is they are learning. It is the opposite of the passive, teacher-led classroom in which students memorize and then regurgitate what they hear and see.*

*Authentic learning makes course concepts relevant to students so that they can retain the information at hand and pivot the knowledge to real-world situations. It involves centering students and their ideas while nurturing them along the educational journey through frequent, low-stakes assessments, constructive feedback, as well as assessment design that enables a student-instructor relationship.*

*Steve Revington, Turnitin*

The CCSR provides an authentic experience for student leaders who select projects that they believe are important to address locally and globally. The advisors are "guides on the sides" who support and advise the leaders. The authentic selection process has been one of the cornerstones of the CCSR program methodology, along with Project-Based Learning (PBL) Authentic learning, also known as experiential learning, is a teaching method that focuses on real-world problems. It is effective because it allows students to connect the material they are learning and the world around them, increasing their engagement and motivation. Additionally,

authentic learning tasks often require students to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which can help them develop and apply them in other areas of their lives. Additionally, it allows learners to apply the learning in a real-world scenario, making it more meaningful and relevant.

**Mirror Neurons**

Mirror Neurons are essential for learning because they facilitate imitation, modeling, empathy, social understanding, language acquisition, motor skill learning, and emotional regulation. Understanding the role of mirror neurons can help educators and learners alike optimize learning experiences and enhance the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

. Imitation and Modeling: Mirror neurons enable individuals to observe and imitate the actions of others. When we see someone perform a particular action, mirror neurons in our brain fire, creating a neural representation of that action. This ability to imitate and model behaviors is essential in learning, especially during early development and social learning.

. Empathy and Social Understanding: Mirror neurons are involved in empathetic responses. They allow us to emotionally resonate with the experiences and emotions of others by mirroring their actions and feelings in our neural processes. This capacity for empathy is crucial for understanding others, fostering social connections, and cooperating with peers in a learning environment.

. Emotional Regulation: Mirror neurons may also play a role in emotional regulation. Observing how others respond emotionally to certain situations can influence and modulate our emotional responses, aiding emotional learning and self-regulation.

. Facilitation of Group Learning: In a group learning setting, when one individual demonstrates a concept or skill, mirror neurons in other group members can activate, enhancing the overall learning experience for the entire group.

**Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

ACEs are traumatic events that occur during childhood or adolescence, such as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, and exposure to violence or substance abuse. These experiences can hurt a child's development, behavior, and health outcomes. According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: on and Control Division of Violence Prevention, skill-based learning is an integral part of a comprehensive approach to preventing ACEs. Decades of research show that teaching children and youth skills to handle stress, resolve conflicts, and manage their emotions and behaviors can prevent violent victimization and perpetration, as well as substance misuse, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and teen pregnancy. After-school programs, like the CCSR, are a way to provide opportunities for youth to strengthen their behavioral, leadership, and academic skills and become involved in positive school and community activities. Mentoring and after-school programs can reduce the prevalence of crime, violence, and other adolescent risk behaviors and pave the way for positive outcomes in adulthood. Evidence suggests mentoring programs improve behavioral, social, emotional, and academic outcomes. Other benefits include improvements in academic performance, parent-child and student-teacher relationships, and parental trust. In addition, opportunities to develop and practice leadership, decision-making, self-management, and social problem-solving skills are essential components of after-school programs with documented benefits.

**Educational Benefits of the CCSR**

- Promotes empathy, compassion, teamwork, and leadership skills

-  Helps prevent depression, hopelessness, loneliness, anxiety, addiction, etc.

- Improves self-esteem and self-confidence

- Improves communication skills to effectively communicate with their peers, as well as with other members of the school community

- Develops organization skills - leaders learn to plan and organize events and activities

- Enhances problem-solving skills - leaders learn to identify and solve problems within their organization or school community.

- Develops Responsiveness - leaders learn to be responsive to the needs and concerns of their peers and be willing to listen to and consider different perspectives.

- Enhances Compassion and Empathy: Student leaders can understand and relate to the experiences and perspectives of their peers.

- Provides a learning environment and support for dealing with emotional issues such as anxiety, fear, hopelessness, depression

## CCSR Video Clips

### Video of the CCSR at Medford High School

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6j2J1icB9Mg

### Houston Project - Channel 5 broadcast w/Antoinette Antonio--

> http://www.wcvb.com/article/a-plus-helping-victims-of-hurricane-harvey/13798501

### CCSR Project Fair

https://youtu.be/_gPlU5UTn18

### Monument for enslaved people who died in Medford - Brooks Elementary School

Medford Students Unveil Memorial for Unmarked Graves Of Slaves | WBUR News