De La Salle Academy

COHORT 5

Amy Hernandez, Teacher

Our Civic Spirit Project was a testament to the active participation of our middle schoolers. We created a club where they could not only learn about Civics but also teach others. The students took the initiative to present what they learned during our school-wide Community Meeting. Their presentation, showcased via Canva slides, was a testament to their understanding of the themes and topics explored in the club. They even delighted the school with a student-made choreography to the song "Stronger" by Janelle Monae, from the Netflix series “We the People.”

My goal was to have students gain a better understanding of what “Civic Spirit” meant and for them to share that knowledge with the school community. Our club explored two significant cases: Plessy v Furgeson and Brown v Board of Education. The club decided to focus on democratic literacy in order to build a strong foundation on which to challenge ideas, take action, and essentially be involved as a citizen. Students discussed how court systems can become more “just” over time when people come together to advocate for equality. With the help of Coach Audi, students engaged in a democratic auction, a reading of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, they visited their local public library, and the 9/11 memorial.

The club aligned with the mission of DLSA in that it focused on respect and mutual care for all people. Students came to realize that the concept of community reaches far beyond the scope of our school, neighborhoods, or even New York. The larger community is the country which allows them to enjoy the benefits and join in the struggle of their fellow citizens. Civics also has found its way into my Spanish class, Ethics elective, and Choreography club. In Spanish class, students covered a unit on social justice where we discussed whether doing a wrong thing for a good reason was justified. In the text “El Ultimo Viaje” by A.C. Quintero, the main character, broke the law in order to help her dying grandmother. Throughout the course, students debated whether obeying the law and maintaining a safe community comes before loyalty to family. Needless to say, students (and myself) walked away with a better understanding of why achieving justice by unjust means is not correct. We also had a segment dedicated to culture and food! It was beautiful to see students share a traditional food with the class and explain its significance. In my Ethics class there were many opportunities to find intersections between civic responsibilities and religious faith. On one occasion

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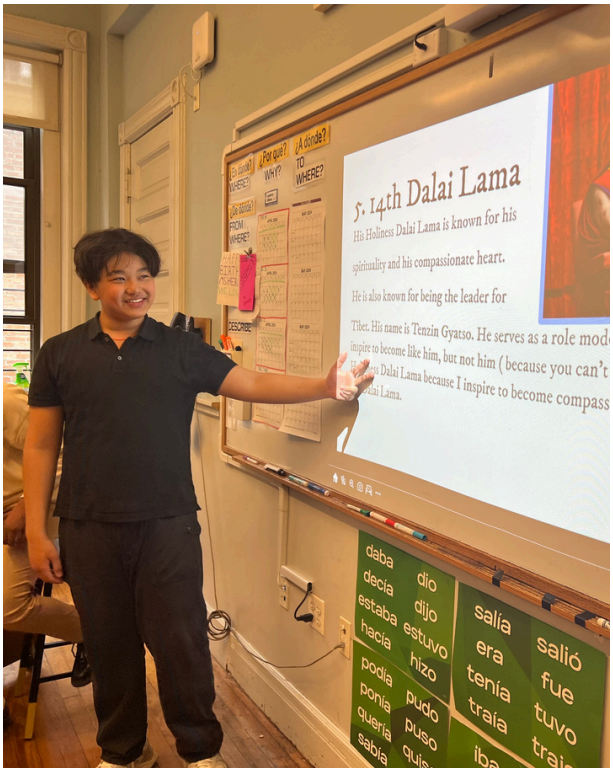

students listed five individuals who they thought teenagers would benefit from knowing, given their social contributions and faith-centered work. They gave a brief presentation on why those individuals were morally good influences and great civic leaders.

Finally, in my choreography class, students decided to create a dance for our Peace and Justice Assembly which is held annually at DLSA in the month of May. Students created a dance to the YMCA song after learning about the origin of the song and the founder, George Williams. The dance is meant to bring attention to the difficulties of living on the streets and the hope found in the community. I found many aspects meaningful this year, particularly working with students on their presentations and dances. It was inspiring to have students feel compelled to demonstrate their civic passion through the arts. I was also immensely appreciative of the time spent with my coach Audi. She helped give me ideas and resources to incorporate into my classes.