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Community Outreach and Empowerment through Service Learning and Volunteerism

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**Pace University Vote 18 Political Literacy Project
CORNERSTONE II**

Community Outreach and Empowerment through Service Learning and Volunteerism

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November 15, 2009

I. Outline of Original Goals

Pace University and Vote 18 are teaming up in 2009-2010 to launch an exciting program for NYC high school kids to provide them with an in-depth experience in political literacy and civic engagement. The NYC Political Literacy Project brings Vote 18 together with Pace University students to provide high schoolers with a dynamic way to get involved with local, state, and national politics. The object is to teach civic engagement and literacy through direct interaction with real campaigns, issues, events, and people in each of the high school students' local communities. Students will engage the events of their communities through interviews, reporting, dialogue and debate that will all be captured on the NYC Political Literacy Project website, soon to be launched. The site will be overseen by the Vote 18 student facilitators from Pace University.

Phase I: September 2009

Vote 18 and Pace University students will begin recruiting the high school Political Literacy Project (PLP) Reporters from across the city. It will do so by introducing its nationally recognized civics lesson on voting and democracy to classes of high school students all over the city. The Pace students will be identifying the PLP Reporters from those civics lesson sessions.

Phase II: October-November 2009

In October, the PLP Reporters will be reporting on citywide elections for mayor, comptroller, public advocate, district attorney, and city council ahead of the Nov 4 election. Students will be tasked with researching or attending local events such as: campaign rallies, press conferences, meetings of the City Council or the Board of Education. The reports will seek to provide readers with an overview of who is running in their community and which of each candidate's principle issues that most relate to youth issues. Reports will be brief and posted online via the NYC PLP website.

Phase III: Nov 2009 – May 2010:

Students will be tasked with interviewing and reporting on their local representatives at the local, city, borough, state, and national level. Students will be interacting with the following representatives:

- City Council
- District Attorney
- Borough President
- State Senator
- State Assemblyman
- Public Advocate
- City Comptroller
- Mayor
- Member of US Congress
- US Senator
- Governor
- Attorney General

PLP Reporters will do two interviews per month with a set of questions directly relating to issues that concern the students' experiences and issues. Questions will be formulated with the help of Vote 18 and Pace facilitators and stem from the initial conversations during the Vote 18 lesson.

Timeline:

- SEP: Vote 18 lesson, Set up student / PACE facilitator relationship, online profiles,
- OCT: NYS election coverage: issues that matter to students, affect their lives, fam. lives, local community.
- NOV: Local reporting of civic events, discussion, meetings, etc: issues that matter to students, affect their lives, fam. lives, local community.
- DEC: Local reporting of civic events, discussion, meetings, etc: issues that matter to students, affect their lives, fam. lives, local community.
- JAN: Local representative interviews: City, Muni, State
- FEB: Local representative interviews: City, Muni, State
- MAR: Local representative interviews: City, Muni, State
- APR: Reporting on Gov's Race: issues that matter to students, affect their lives, fam. lives, local community.
- MAY: Wrap up / Write up
- JUN: Vote 18 / PACE Report submission

II. Progress Made on Goals

The project has gotten off to an incredibly spectacular start. 122 students from Pace High School and the Upward Bound Program Housed at Pace University have taken part in the Political Literacy Project. During September and October, the students followed closely the New York City mayoral election which culminated with the reelection of Mike Bloomberg on November 4th. The students blogged about the election using the Vote 18 site: <http://vote18plp.ning.com/>. The students engaged in debates and discussions about each candidate, analyzed how the media covered the candidates, considered how Bloomberg and Thompson developed their campaign message, and how they sought to attack their opponents. They used the tools of the internet to do so, in the process learning important technological skills that combined with their political literacy development.

The students work garnered media attention. During the last mayoral debate a week before the election, the students were asked to join in an online chat session with WNYC's Brian Lehrer. The students were prominently featured on Brian's blog for that debate. The following morning, October 28th, I was on the Brian Lehrer Show (<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/bl/episodes/2009/10/28>) discussing the students views, their knowledge of the election, and their interest in politics.

The week after the election, I appeared on Brian's show again, this time in studio, with two of the Political Literacy Project's students to discuss one of the major issues that came up in the mayoral debate: standardized tests. We were on Brian's show for nearly 30 minutes and that interview can be accessed on Brian's site: <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/bl/episodes/2009/11/11>.

III. How Many students have been impacted

There have been 122 high school students and 3 Pace students involved in the Political Literacy Project.

IV. Other Faculty Members Impacted

I have worked closely with Dr. Art Maloney who directs Pace High School. He has assisted me with

V. Next Steps

We have moved into Phase III of the Project outlined above.