Setting the Tone
The tone you set at the outset is essential. This is not a top down process, but rather it involves a series of discussions and meetings that encourage open and honest discussion about how to strengthen the civic mission of your school. Unlike other reforms, this will involve the participation of many different groups in your school and community, including teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members. Each has a role; together they will determine the shape your plan will take. We have learned from experience that to be successful, you will need to create an atmosphere of collegiality, flexibility, possibility and opportunity.

Remember: This process may take weeks, even months depending on the need of your school and community. Meetings will vary. One of our teams met over lunch weekly; others met monthly with smaller meetings in-between. Do what best suits the culture of your school. The pilot teams recommend that you think about strategies that build momentum and interest on your campus and in your community. How you do this is up to you.

What follows is our best effort at laying out an approach to this process. It includes a series of "steps" and guiding questions. We know that in "real life" this will look different. You may add a few steps or merge others. You will likely add other questions you want to pose and ignore those that don't apply.

Step One: Your first Leadership Team meeting.

- Based on the Goals of Civic Education, what do we see as strengths and needs of our students?

- Do we see any obvious gaps in student knowledge, skills, or dispositions that we should focus on right away? Do any of the goals of civic education overlap with things we are already working on?

- As we look at the promising approaches, what are we already doing that supports each one? What "in-class" and out-of-class" things do we know are happening?

Step Two: Hold Discussions with Key Groups

- How can we engage others in the process of enhancing civic opportunities for our students? What are the key groups we should target?

- As we talk to other groups in the school, is there a particular format we want to use? Which resources should we use to overview the Civic Mission of Schools? How do we want to frame our school Campaign goals at this point?

- How can we avoid having people think that this is just one more thing they have to do on top of everything else?

Step Three: Bring the Ideas Back to the Table

- How should we share and summarize what we gathered from talking to other key groups?

    - Consider creating categories on chart paper and having the participants who facilitated discussions add to the charts in writing, then discuss as a whole group. (As opposed to one person at a time reporting.)

    - Consider dividing into smaller groups to share information, then summarizing key findings. One group could consist of those members who worked with academic subject areas (Social Studies, English-Language Arts departments); another group could represent co-curricular/leadership; and a third group could represent parents, community members, youth.

- What common goals, ideas, strategies emerge from these discussions? Do we see common priorities among the groups? Should these become the priorities for our initial school plan?

- Were there concerns or challenges put forth by any of the groups we should look at?

- Are there things that groups are already doing that we should recognize school-wide? Are there things that groups or individuals are doing that we should try to expand upon or replicate within our school/district?

- What ideas emerged that we should incorporate in our initial plan?

Step Four: Implement!

- How can we document our progress and our work? Do we want to build in any assessment along the way? Do we want to try to capture any student outcomes or keep track of the impact our activities have? Are there ways we can do this without placing a burden students or teachers? (See Campaign Resource: Ideas for Gauging Success.)

- How can we draw attention to the good things we're doing? Who should we tell? Should we involve media, district administrators, school board, local government officials? Others? (See Campaign Resource: Educating for Democracy – Press Kit for California Campaign Schools.)

Step Five: Share Your Work with the Campaign and Other Schools

- What could we submit to the state and national resource directories that might be useful to other schools?

- In addition to our completed planning document, what else should we share with Campaign staff to show what we did?