yChange

Teacher's Handbook

South Australia's first curriculum aligned, project based action civics resource for primary and secondary educators

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Commissioner's Message

Hello and welcome to South Australia's first curriculum aligned, project based, action civics resource for primary and secondary educators.

I am excited to present **yChange** – a free action civics resource created in partnership with South Australian children, young people, educators and local, state, national and international civics experts.

In South Australia children and young people have identified a growing desire to understand the systems they live in, to know how to engage in the world around them, and to acquire the skills they need to transition into adulthood.

There is a recognition amongst young people that their current civics knowledge is insufficient, and that their understanding of it is central to their capacity to become active citizens within Australia's democracy.

Young people have told me they see themselves as a generation for change; that if given the chance they could have a positive impact on the world around them, both now and into the future, particularly within their own local communities.

Young people's capacity for finding creative, innovative solutions to both big and small problems is untapped and should not be underestimated. They seek solutions which foster their innate curiosity, encourage healthy degrees of risk taking, and use of their imaginations to address issues that matter to them most.

Young people know that the opportunities they have early in life impact on their ability to achieve their dreams later. They want adults to help them get a foot in the door on civics, so they can make a start on realising their generation's unified desire to create a fairer and more equitable world.

As adults working with children and young people we have a responsibility to teach the skills and knowledge they need to achieve successful participation in society, and through that participation be able to live a happy and healthy life. We know the world that children and young people will inherit is one grappling with some of the most complex issues humanity and our planet has ever faced. This makes learning and applying civic knowledge and skills crucial to children and young people growing up now.

Young South Australians also see themselves as global citizens whose relationships cross continents, sovereignties and ideological lines. They have grown up in a digital world that has impacted on their access to information and services changing the way they learn and interact. This in turn has influenced how their opinions are formed, and the ways in which their opportunities to participate and influence society are exercised.

They tune into global trends and maintain world views that extend well beyond state and national borders. Consequently, young people's connections to their local community are decreasing, with fewer young people feeling attached to where they live or the largely conventional neighbourhoods in which they find themselves. As such, it is more important than ever to build positive associations for children and young people in their local communities, both inside and outside of school. Schools can act as the bridge that connects children and young people with their communities while simultaneously fostering learning outside the classroom.

'[we need] Comprehensive civics education – what are taxes, what is voting, how do I vote, what is the point of democracy, why should I care?' (16 year old)

The proficiency with which young South Australians demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the role civics and citizenship plays in building a cohesive, well-functioning society sits well below national and international averages. Test scores illustrate both a gender and an opportunity gap.

Internationally and at home, we witness a growing mistrust of government and a disillusionment with the model of liberal democracy. This is especially so amongst young people. The consequences of this growing lack of trust when combined with a growing lack of civics proficiency is worrying for our democracy and the ideals and values it represents. Democracy works best when citizens actively engage with and participate in decision making to uphold agreed ideals and values.

The primary purpose for teaching civics and citizenship in Australian schools is to provide young people with the confidence and understanding they need to develop their civic identity to live as citizens in their local and wider communities, and to actively participate in creating a future that enhances the lives of all Australians, young and old.

Educators and students alike have been calling for an approach to civic education that empowers young people with the skills and knowledge they need to become active, responsible citizens. These are the principles encapsulated in action civics – a student-centred, project based, high quality civics education approach.

yChange has been developed in collaboration with students, educators and civics experts to provide all South Australian educators with teaching resources designed to deliver this. Through development of civic knowledge, civic skills, civic participation and civic empowerment, students leave **yChange** knowing what it means to be an active citizen.

I put forward the challenge to educators in South Australia to complete **yChange** with their students and help close the civic engagement gap that currently exists within our State.

Like me, the **yChange** project partners, who include the Commonwealth and State Parliaments, History Trust of South Australia and Centre of Democracy cannot wait to see what South Australian students will do through **yChange**.

Let's work together to ensure all South Australian children and young people become active and informed citizens, who are ready and equipped to face the uncertainties and challenges of tomorrow.

Helen Connolly
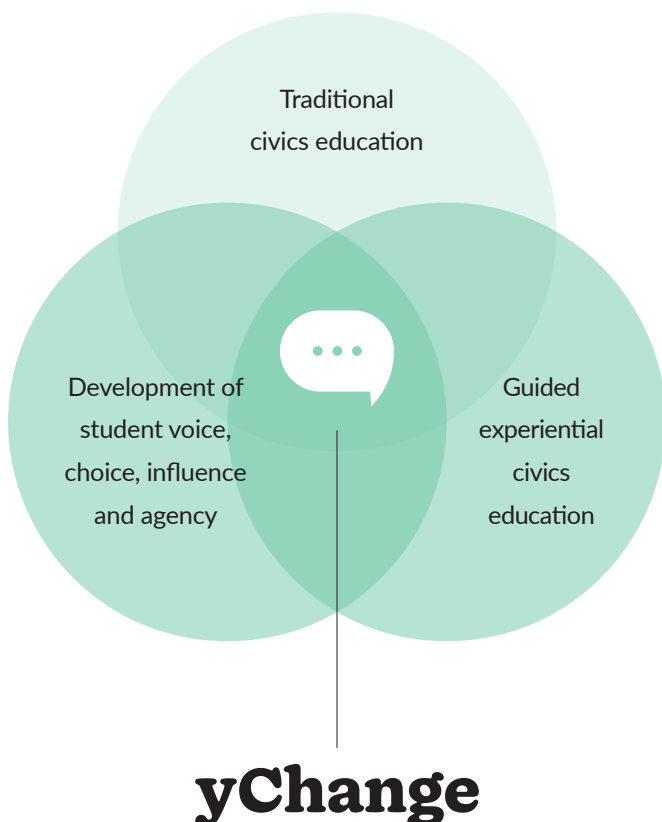Commissioner for Children and Young People SA

Overview

yChange prepares students to become active and informed citizens.[1]

Designed as an experiential learning journey **yChange** supports educators to create real-world opportunities for students to engage directly in civic life.

Action civics programs by their nature aim to help students 'learn civics by doing civics on personally relevant issues'. Given the wide variety of social issues young people find important, a promising approach for effective civics education is to let students identify the issues they would like to pursue and then provide them with opportunities for agency. **yChange** does this with built-in flexibility that allows schools to scale and modify the program according to their preferences.

Figure 1. Components of the **yChange** Action Civics Learning Journey

Traditional civics education

Development of student voice, choice, influence and agency

Guided experiential civics education

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The 4 guiding principles of learning embedded in **yChange** are:

1 **Voice:** listening to students' opinions, experience, knowledge, worries, hopes and dreams.
2 **Agency:** developing action, responsibility and leadership.
3 **Action:** prioritising collective action of students.
4 **Reflection:** embedding learning and building empathy.

The 4 guiding principles form the basis of the **yChange** 5 Part Learning Journey which consists of students:

1 identifying a problem relevant to their own lives
2 conducting research to understand the problem better
3 creating an action plan that addresses the problem based on the research undertaken and collected,
4 actioning the plan by targeting key decision makers and influencers who can bring about proposed change; and
5 presenting the findings and outcomes of their project.

When students reach Part 4 of their learning journey schools can apply for a **yChange** Action Grant to implement their students' action plan. Read more about this on page 106.

Once the **yChange** learning journey has been completed, schools upload their completed project presentations onto the **yChange Project Showcase**. This gallery of action civics projects will build year on year and be promoted amongst decision makers and influencers to demonstrate the ideas and creative solutions children and young people in South Australia have devised through **yChange**. Students are encouraged to also enter their **yChange** projects into the Governor's Civic Awards for Schools to which **yChange** is linked.

yChange is not a political program – nor is it focused on a single issue.

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The 5 Part Learning Journey

Start here	**Preparatory lessons** — Rights and responsibilities — Justice, equality and equity	**Optional Lessons** Students cover the fundamentals to orientate them to the course materials

1	**Part 1** (Lessons 1, 2 & 3) Identify an issue	**The 'Prepare' stage** Students learn through 'traditional' civics education
2	**Part 2** (Lessons 4, 5 & 6) Research the causes	

3	**Part 3** (Lessons 7 & 8) Create a plan	**The 'Practice' stage** Students learn through guided experiential civics education
4	**Part 4** (Lessons 9 & 10) Action the plan	

5	**Part 5** (Lessons 11 & 12) Communicate findings	**The 'Present' stage** Students present their work on the **yChange Project Showcase** and reflect on what they've learnt

Promoting Student Voice, Choice, Influence and Agency

Civics and citizenship

A component of the Australian Curriculum, civics and citizenship education is a requirement of children and young people's education until Year 11. The importance of comprehensive civics and citizenship education is underpinned by Goal 2 of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration:

> *'All young Australians become confident and creative, individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed citizens.'*[2]

To realise this goal, educators combine student voice, choice, influence and agency (VCIA) with 'traditional' civics education and guided-experiential civics education. In doing so, education equips students with knowledge of the systems and skills needed to be able to access, communicate and analyse information.

Facilitating student voice through participation in decision making within the classroom builds student engagement and fosters a commitment to learning. It also transforms educational approaches by requiring students to partner with others to investigate and develop ideas, plans and actions that improve learning for all.

yChange has been mapped to the relevant strands of the Australian Curriculum so that each lesson addresses the mandated civics and citizenship skills and knowledge.

The aim of civics and citizenship education is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society.

Through **yChange**, students explore and develop their understanding and viewpoints on civic identity, roles in the community and the rights and responsibilities of citizens more broadly. Students build their connections to the school and community, and develop skills and knowledge in making decisions, working collaboratively and making plans for action.

As sportspersons improve through practice, and performers through rehearsal, engaged citizens hone their skills through active engagement in action civics. Action civics empowers young people to identify issues relevant to their own lives, conduct research into these issues, and advocate for change based on the research evidence they gather.

Social and emotional learning

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. It is the process by which people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.[3]

Social and emotional learning advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school, family and community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing meaningful evaluation. It can help empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to building safe, healthy, just communities.

In the Australian Curriculum, social and emotional learning falls under the cross curriculum capability of 'Personal and Social Capability'. The personal and social capability continuum begins with students recognising their own and other's emotions and continues through to presenting and developing leadership through project work.

> *'Civics and Citizenship students are encouraged to develop and apply personal, interpersonal and social skills, behaviours and dispositions, through working collaboratively and constructively in groups, developing their communication, decision-making, conflict resolution and leadership skills, and learning to appreciate the insights and perspectives of others.' (Personal and Social Capabilities, Australian Curriculum)*[4]

yChange covers 5 broad and interrelated areas of social and emotional learning competency: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

yChange takes place in student groups and requires the following:

— skills in listening to others' opinions while managing one's own emotions
— respectful debate that includes multiple perspectives
— empathic understanding of social issues; and
— group participation skills for working on consensus decision making.

Within yChange, social and emotional learning is advanced through:

— working collaboratively
— making decisions
— identifying community members who work in the student group's areas of interest
— developing social awareness
— building relationship skills; and
— reflecting on individual and group work and the role this plays in action civics.

Improving wellbeing

Student participation is an important part of improving wellbeing in schools. As outlined in a study undertaken by Southern Cross University, if educators want to improve wellbeing outcomes in their school, they must first address student participation.[5] The study indicated that by improving mechanisms of student voice, choice, influence and agency, educators can increase the happiness and wellbeing of students. The highest reported wellbeing outcomes identified in the study were from students who felt like partners in the work they did at school, whether undertaken as part of a project team or as a member of a committee.

In **yChange** the role of educators is to act as a guide and to learn, with students, about the chosen issue in greater detail. No one needs to be an expert and by creating a partnership, especially a collective partnership with community organisations and groups, students can experience what it's like to have true influence and agency.

yChange uses Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset framework to ground students in a way of thinking that promotes possibilities as endless, setbacks as inevitable, and challenges as fun.[6] **yChange** encourages students to reflect on their work and recognise what is going well and what can be done better, while providing positive reinforcement throughout.

The use of a growth mindset and promotion of self-efficacy can increase students' ability and belief in their capacity to succeed. By connecting students to community groups, **yChange** can also add to a student's sense of belonging, enabling an experience of real life relevance through identification of an actual issue they work with others to address to have a positive impact in the neighbourhood in which they live.

How VCIA occurs throughout yChange

Wellbeing Indicator	How does it develop?
Student Voice	Educators hear directly from students on issues they care about and together choose 1 to focus on.
Student Choice	Students develop their own set of standards on how they think students should behave and which values they would like to promote during **yChange**.
Student Influence	Students lead research into the class' chosen issue, influencing the way in which this is undertaken by determining the how and what questions that will be asked. Students can also directly influence the ways in which they want to learn.
Student Agency	In the latter lessons, students are driven by their own interests and skills and are encouraged to undertake self-initiated learning with appropriate guidance from teachers on where to go to next on the **yChange** learning journey, including creation and implementation of their project action plan on which they reflect and present for peer review.

Flexible Delivery Options

yChange can be taught at any time throughout the school year. It is best delivered over 2 consecutive terms but can also be undertaken over 1 term.

yChange has 5 parts:
— Part 1: Identify 1 issue of importance
— Part 2: Research the root causes of the issue chosen
— Part 3: Create a plan of action
— Part 4: Action the plan - by doing it!
— Part 5: Communicate the findings and present and reflect on the learning journey.

Parts 1 & 2 of **yChange** focus on theory and address the knowledge strand of the civics and citizenship curriculum. Parts 3, 4 & 5 address the skills strand and involve students practising applying the knowledge they've gained and presenting what they've learned to peers.

There are also 2 preparatory lesson plans that focus on delivering concepts that are intrinsic to **yChange**. These optional lessons cover rights and responsibilities, community, citizenship, justice, equality and equity. Completing the preparatory lesson plans is not essential, but it is recommended as a way to get students thinking about the themes encompassed by action civics and to help develop their ideas around issues occurring at the local, national and global levels.

The lesson plans can be scaled up or down depending on the length of your lessons, the ability and age of your students, and how in depth you want to go with certain topics or activities.

For example, your class might take longer talking about a specific issue, or they might want to spend more lesson time researching their issue or writing their action plan. Twelve lesson plans are designed so they can be condensed or extended easily depending on preferences and needs.

yChange Action Grants
In Part 3 of **yChange** students work together to prepare their project action plan. Once this plan has been completed schools can apply for a small **yChange** Action Grant of up to $500 to enable students to implement their plan.

The yChange Project Showcase
yChange culminates in an online gallery of completed school projects. Your school group is also encouraged to enter the Governor's Civic Awards for Schools, which may see your students receive a prize that takes them all the way to Government House. Present your students' work by uploading it into the **yChange Project Showcase** which will be promoted to decision makers and influencers throughout South Australia and beyond through the Commissioner's ongoing advocacy work.

yChange

Course Outline

Course outline

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Preparatory Lessons		
Preparatory Lesson 1: Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship Students introduce themselves to the UNCRC, Human Rights, Community and Citizenship. Students reflect on their own rights and citizenship.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Explored human rights and children's rights in relation to their own lives. — Distinguished what the terms citizen, community and citizenship mean.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – My community — Main Activity – Rights, rules and responsibilities — Preparing for the next phase – Being a good citizen **Student Activity Sheet X 3:** — My community — Rights, rules and responsibilities — Being a good citizen
Preparatory Lesson 2: Equality, Equity and Justice Students work through the concepts of equality, equity and justice and are guided through case studies that conceptualise fairness in society.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Analysed examples of fairness and examined their own attitudes and understanding of equality, equity and justice.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction - Understanding equality and equity — Main Activity – Making fair decisions — Preparing for the next phase – Exploring justice **Student Activity Sheets X 3:** — Understanding equality and equity — Making fair decisions — Concept map of justice
Part 1 — Identify an issue		
Lesson 1: Introduction to action civics Following an introduction to action civics, students reflect on their own experiences of civics and their attitude towards citizenship more broadly. They are guided through an overview of the **yChange** learning journey and set their civics learning goals in relation to their head, heart and hands.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Assessed their own level of civic engagement — Explored what it means to be a citizen — Explored the different levels of government and learnt which level of government has responsibility for what — Explored the importance of expressing voice in action civics by bringing their thoughts and ideas to the process through sharing their ideas, opinions and experiences with others.	**Teachers' Instructions:** — Introduction – Action civics and learning goals — Main activity –Introduction to citizenship — Main activity – Introduction government — Preparing for the next phase – Opinion spectrum activity **Student Activity Sheets:** — Action civics and learning goals — Introduction to citizenship — Who does what? **Answer Sheet:** — Who does what?
Lesson 2: Identifying issues that matter to us Students put their guidelines for interacting with each other into a Classroom Constitution and then practice expressing their ideas and opinions. They brainstorm community issues using multiple sources (their personal ideas, interviews with others, and local media). Students engage in a class wide debate to examine their top issues further and narrow their list of four down to their top two.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Created their own Classroom Constitution — Prioritised a list of community issues that are important to them — Engaged in a debate about the strengths and weaknesses of each community issue to arrive at their top two.	**Teachers' Instructions:** — Introduction: Create a classroom constitution — Main Activity – Define community, and identify and debate community issues — Main Activity – Identifying community issues — Main Activity – Debate on community issues — Preparing for the next phase – Use of democratic processes to decide on top two issues **Student Activity Sheets:** — My community (Community Wheel)

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Lesson 3: Choosing the issue Students compare the merits of voting and consensus-building as the decision making tools used in the democratic process. Students use opinion spectrums to assess their class' interest in the final two focus issues and build consensus on one issue to focus on during **yChange**.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Utilised voting and consensus-building to identify the key community issue they wish to focus on as a group. — Decided on the key focus issue for their class **yChange** project.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – Students' previous experience with decision making — Main Activity – Building consensus on an issue — Main Activity – Review and reflect **Student Activity Sheets:** — My experience of making decisions

Part 2 — Research the causes

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Lesson 4: Analyse causes Reflecting on their personal experiences, students learn the differences between individual and systemic issues and what causes them. Using team research techniques they analyse the issue chosen in the context of local, state and federal government responsibilities, including how citizens can have an impact on decision makers. Students apply the concepts they've learned to example projects and prepare to conduct research into their own issue over the next few lessons.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Distinguished the differences between individual and systemic issues and what causes them — Reviewed the basic structures and functions of local, state and federal governments; and — Analysed example yChange projects to identify project goals, preparing to apply this knowledge to their own project.	Video: Root Cause: Individual or Systemic? **Teacher's instructions:** — Introduction – What are systemic issues? — Main Activity – Understanding what causes community issues — Main Activity – The role of government **Student Activity Sheets:** — Understanding what causes community issues — The role of government (Legislative) — The role of government (Executive) **Answer Sheets:** — The role of government (Legislative) — The role of government (Executive)
Lesson 5: Getting started on research Students are introduced to the concept of team research and the need to systematically research the focus issue. Students are assigned to a research team with whom they will work throughout the research stage.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Learned about 'allies' and distinguished between decision makers and influencers — Reviewed the principles of research, including the four key types of information they will be seeking over the course of the next few lessons — Assigned roles to each member of their research team.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – Who's in our community? — Main Activity – Researching in teams **Student Activity Sheets:** — Research tasks
Lesson 6: Developing research Students will host a guest speaker who will be able to provide a background and snapshot view of the current situation in relation to their focus issue. Students continue working in small teams to conduct research into the key issue gaining a comprehensive understanding of its depth and dimension. They build on the preparation work undertaken in the previous class to complete any remaining research work including an opportunity to interview an expert (the guest speaker) to help establish key causes and determine who the key decision makers for their focus issue are.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Interviewed a guest speaker (expert) — Completed research tasks for their team — Compiled and recorded the relevant information they have learned as it relates to the root causes of their focus issue — Established the key causes and impacts of their issue — Determined who the decision makers are.	— Video playback equipment for guest speaker (if requested/needed) — Brief biography of guest speaker — Thank you card for students to sign

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources

Part 3 — Create a plan

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Lesson 7: Setting a goal for action Students work together to compile their research, synthesise the results and agree on a group goal for their **yChange** project.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Collaborated with their research teams to present findings and recommendations to the class — Synthesised the results of their class research to identify the most actionable information with which to develop their **yChange** Action Plan — Identified a group goal they want to achieve.	**Teachers instructions:** — Introduction – Synthesising research — Main Activity – Choosing a goal for action — Main Activity – Fist-to-five vote — Preparing for the next phase – Brainstorm decision makers
Lesson 8: Developing a civics action plan Students begin to draw up their civics action plan by creating a power map of decision makers who they think could be engaged with their focus issue, including identifying other influencers. Students review the three action types and choose actions within these types with which to engage their list of decision makers/influencers.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Refined their list of key decision makers and influencers. — Made distinctions between this list and who they think might be they key decision maker in connection with their issue and overall goal. — Analysed each key decision maker and developed an 'ask' for each. — Determined the best actions to take to engage the decision maker/ influencers with their issue.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – Creating a power map — Main Activity – Developing the 'ask' — Main Activity – Developing actions — Preparing for the next phase – Review and reflect **Student Activity Sheets:** — Power map — Choosing action types

Part 4 — Action the plan

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Lesson 9: Putting the plan into action Students work in their research teams to develop and finalise their small group **yChange** action plans. They begin to implement the strategies they've determined will work best to engage the decision maker with their focus issue and goal.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Drafted, edited and published materials created to engage their decision makers with their **yChange** focus issue and goal — Explained changes made to their approach, argument, attitude or actions in response to information they've uncovered through their research.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction: Effective Teamwork — Main Activity: Action! (The **How to Approach Action Lessons Guide**) — Preparing for the next phase – Review progress **Student Activity Sheet:** — Effective teamwork
Lesson 10+: Action Lesson(s): Students continue to work in small groups, or as a whole class either in one lesson or over a number of lessons, actioning the strategies for engaging with key decision makers. Teacher's are guided through possible actions in the **How to Approach Actions Lessons Guide**. **yChange Action Grant** Schools can apply for a **yChange** Action Grant of up to $500 to support implementation of their students' **yChange** action plan.	**By the end of the lesson/s students will have:** — Completed the following actions – letter writing, interviewing, meeting with key decision makers, conducting surveys, raising money, or buying products relevant to their action plan. — Moved closer to an end point that addresses the issue chosen.	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – Using the **How to Approach Action Lessons Guide** — Main Activity – Action! (**yChange** Action Grant) — Preparing for the next phase – Following up on actions

Lesson	Outcomes	Resources
Part 5 — Communicate findings		
Lesson 11: Presenting to the class! Students prepare visual, verbal and/or digital presentations summarising what they have learnt, including a description of the outcomes of their **yChange** project. In their groups they practice presenting their section to the whole class and receive feedback from their peers on what was good and what needs improvement. They incorporate the feedback received and adjust the presentation for final submission onto the **yChange Project Showcase**.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Begun designing the format, structure and sections of the class presentation — Received and offered feedback on their sections and those of other students. — Collated their section with others to create the whole class' **yChange** presentation ready for upload (submission) onto the **yChange Project Showcase** at ychange.com.au/project-showcase	**Teacher's Instructions:** — Introduction – Preparing for presentations — Main Activity – Presenting to the class — Preparing for the next phase – wrap up and project submission onto the **yChange Project Showcase**.
Lesson 12: Time to reflect Students reflect and discuss their **yChange** experience, considering what they've learnt throughout the course and what this means for their sense of citizenship, community, and how they will express their opinions and ideas into the future, including any civic action they may take individually or as part of a community group.	**By the end of the lesson students will have:** — Examined the development of their own civic identity through their participation in and completion of the yChange learning journey. — Decided on what comes next for them based on what they've learnt. — Discussed as a class how successful they were in reaching their goal and addressing the focus issue, including what they would do differently next time. — Reflected on what they will take away from the **yChange** learning journey.	**Teacher's instructions:** — Introduction – Highs & Lows — Main Activity – My reflections — Preparing for the next phase – Next steps **Student Activity Sheet:** — yChange Debrief