

# **Youth Nation**

*6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students*

# **DAY 1: *Introduction to Youth Nation***

## **STEP 1. Introduce Youth Nation (1-3 min)**

- Tell your class what Youth Nation is, using this example: ***“Youth Nation is a website designed for kids like you to get involved with your communities, which can be your classroom, your school, or even your city. Today, I am going to introduce you to Youth Nation and why I think it will be fun and helpful to you.”***
- Explain how Youth Nation is focused on how students can make an impact on their community.
  - Youth Nation will hopefully give students ideas to make their classrooms, schools, and communities better places.
  - Let students know that Youth Nation is a resource primarily for THEM and that they should provide feedback for what they liked and didn't like so the site is better tailored for them.
  - There are lots of different topics that have been written about, so ask students to choose from their favorites and write comments on the posts.
  - Show enthusiasm for the project and its potential.

## **STEP 2. Introduce Definition: “Civic Engagement” (3-4 min)**

- Distribute or have students get out a journal/notebook.
- Introduce a 3-minute quick-write (or draw) prompt:



***“Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference, according to the American Democracy Project. Can you think of any ways you have made a difference in your community? This could be at home, in your***

***classroom, in a religious setting if applicable, or anywhere else. How have you changed that community? What have you done that you are most proud of? Draw or write your ideas.”***

**STEP 3. Connect “Civic Engagement” to Youth Nation (3-5 min)**

- Have 2-3 students share their examples of civic engagement from their journals.
- Ask follow-up questions like, ***“How will you reach this future?”***  
***“What will you need to do this year?”***
- Explain that Youth Nation is a forum for students to improve their social skills and become productive members of their community.
- Say, ***“Youth Nation is about discovering causes that you are willing to fight for, and finding your voice so you can speak out for what you believe in. Hopefully Youth Nation gives you ideas for what you can achieve in your school to make it a better place to be. Youth Nation is for grades 6, 7, and 8.”***

**STEP 4. Demonstration/Tour of the Website (if possible) (3-5 min)**

- If possible, use a projector to load the website to show the students what the website looks like.
- Enter the URL “<http://www.secdlab.org/youthnation>” into the search bar and hit “ENTER.”
- Important features to point out are:
  - “NEW POSTS” on the left-hand side, which is where students can find new articles published monthly.
  - “SUBMIT A POST” two buttons below “NEW POSTS” where students can submit topics they would like to see covered on the website.

- HOW TO COMMENT: click an article and scroll to the bottom, there should be a white text box where students can answer the question(s) at the end of the article. Once finished, press “POST COMMENT.”
- Encourage students to use the website, through commenting or submitting. There are a wide variety of topics that could interest them, and if they don't like any of the articles, they should suggest something they would like to see instead.