



*Preparing tomorrow's citizens, today*

Since 2004, with the support of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Barat Education Foundation [BEF] has delivered Our American Voice®, a model civics program for elementary and middle schools that has impacted more than 3,000 students of diverse backgrounds in metropolitan Chicago and across the State. OAV builds the character and competencies required for youth to be informed 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens capable of critical thinking and effective leadership.

- Give your students a voice and guide them as they take on a local issue
- Deepen your own understanding and teaching skills in the area of civics
- Access Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources archives and experts
- Collaborate with a community of civically engaged educators and students
- Earn a stipend up to \$3000 as you deliver the program and participate in PD



*"Our American Voice is the only innovative program in the United States that I'm aware of that provides elementary and middle school students with the unique and critical opportunity to enhance their knowledge of the government and political system and to provide a pathway for civic engagement for young citizens. Political knowledge and civic engagement is central to the achievement of civic responsibility."*

**ALAN R. GITELSON, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR ON NPR**



*"OAV helps students to learn citizenship, but also makes them aware of their impact on their community. It lets them realize they have a voice, their actions matter.... It gives them the power and the awareness to make the community a better place."* **LISA BETH LOVERO, OAV TEACHER  
PERSHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Berwyn IL**



*"OAV had a great impact on my life because.... I am more aware about issues in my community and what I can do to help solve them." "It made me think I am a leader."*

**OAV STUDENTS**

Learn More and Become an OAV civic-minded educator:

- Visit [ouramericanvoice.org](http://ouramericanvoice.org)
- Contact us at (847) 574-2465 or E-mail us at [info@thebaratfoundation.org](mailto:info@thebaratfoundation.org)

Barat Education Foundation 847-574-2455

[www.thebaratfoundation.org](http://www.thebaratfoundation.org) [www.ouramericanvoice.org](http://www.ouramericanvoice.org)



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**OUR AMERICAN VOICE® (OAV)** is a project-based Civics learning initiative that develops leadership, problem solving, critical thinking skills. OAV encourages 4th-high school students to collaborate as they learn the fundamentals of American democracy and work to create positive change in their communities.

The program fosters the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to the functioning of a democratic society and the empowerment of young citizens.

OAV focuses on four Core Principles:

- Citizenship is a way of life, not a singular event.
- With our rights and freedoms come responsibilities.
- The success of the individual and the community are interdependent ("E Pluribus Unum").
- The informed participation of the people shapes and sustains our democracy

The OAV program has been implemented in diverse socioeconomic communities, in schools and youth center environments. It aligns with the Illinois State Standards and C3 Framework preparing students to be lifelong engaged citizens. The program has two components:

**Informed Citizenship** is taught through a series of classroom activities, as the OAV teacher introduces the students to the core values that are the basis of our democracy. The curriculum is infused with teacher created inquiry-based lessons utilizing primary sources from the Library of Congress. It takes approximately 20-25 hours to complete all the activities for each grade level.

**Active Citizenship** applies the Core Principles, as students identify and address a current school or community issue. In Part II, the teacher becomes the facilitator incorporating critical thinking activities and guiding students through a structured selection, evaluation and solution process as they address their issue. During this process students have an opportunity to engage with their parents, school and community leaders and elected officials. 30-40 hours needed for the project, approximately 1 hour a week beyond lesson instruction, as an action group.

Teachers follow a monthly pacing guide for both parts of the program.

Our American Voice students will have an opportunity at the end of the program to participate in a collaborative summit to celebrate and share their accomplishments with peers from other OAV groups throughout the state.

Through a combination of in-person and online workshops, the teacher /facilitator has an opportunity to develop his/her civic leadership skills. Teachers will explore governmental processes, current events and how personal bias impacts teaching and learning. Teachers will have optional opportunities to participate in more in-depth Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources professional development workshops that have been designed to foster an inquiry-based teaching model.

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