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## High School Students Get Civics Lessons At Harvard

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By [Quincy Walters](#) 

Wayland High School students Angela Chi and Sam Goldstone discuss politics and their civic responsibility to vote. (Quincy Walters/WBUR)

With so much at stake in the 2020 election, high school students in Massachusetts are thinking way beyond student government.

On Saturday, high schoolers, college students and teachers convened at the Harvard Kennedy School to brainstorm ways to get their communities and peers energized to vote, even if they're not all old enough to cast ballots yet.

"When I got my [driver's] permit, I didn't even know I could pre-register [to vote] until I actually got there," said 16-year-old Sam Goldstone during a brainstorming session on how to get fellow Wayland High School students registered to vote. "Just having informational sessions about, like, motor voter law."

Goldstone sat at a table with two other Wayland High School students, thinking of ways to get their peers into the idea of voting. They talk about some social media platforms they could use to reach their classmates.

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"Oh my God, Tik Tok is a thing now," said 17-year-old Angela Chi. "But my math class gets fired up about it."

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Goldstone, a junior, said getting his peers who are of voting age to actually vote is the best way he can participate in this representative democracy.

"I can't vote for people who invoke policy. [But] those policies that they vote on still affect my everyday life," he said. "I go to school where education guidelines and standards are set by the state government. Although I don't vote for them, I still have to live through them."

This gathering was organized by Harvard's Institute of Politics. Kevin Ballen, a Harvard sophomore who had a role in putting the event together, said students will first have to go through voter registration training.

"We're then matching college students with high school students as mentors," he said. "They're going to be overseeing plans and institutionalization of voter engagement at their schools all the way through 2020."

The idea is that in high school, there's a unique combination of people who can vote and people who can't who are mostly concerned about similar issues.

Wayland student Chi said she's trying to show her older peers how voting can affect what they care about.

"I think everyone kind of has an issue that they care a lot about, even if it's not directly political," she said. "Like my friend really likes space, for example. And so, the politics connection to that is that NASA's underfunded. So, there's always a way to find a connection to these issues."

One group of high school students at the summit said their school administrators haven't been receptive to their on-campus activism. One

student shared that they've been restricted access to their school library for questioning rule changes and that anytime a petition is put up at their school, it's ignored or removed.

The students from Wayland High said that hasn't been their experience.

"The whole administration is very supportive of students and student activism," said senior Charlie Moore.

"We love [principal Allyson] Mizoguchi," Chi said. "Can we shout out Ms. Mizoguchi? I love Ms. Mizoguchi so much."

"Shout out to Wayland High School administration," Goldstone said. "It also helps that one of our assistant principals is like 33 years old."

The students from Wayland say their biggest challenge between now and November 2020 is getting their politically apathetic and jaded peers to register to vote. It's a challenge they've accepted as their civic duty.

*This segment aired on November 17, 2019.*



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