



BATTLE OF THE COUNTIES

COE COORDINATOR TOOLKIT

2026–27 Pilot



PURPOSE OF THIS TOOLKIT

Provide participating County Offices of Education with a common framework for launching and supporting Battle of the Counties while preserving flexibility for local implementation.

Battle of the Counties is the optional competition pathway connected to Schools Reinventing Counties. The Level Up Civics Foundation (Level Up Civics) provides the common learning and competition framework. Participating County Offices of Education serve as the local bridge to districts and schools, helping translate that framework into an implementation model that fits their county.

This toolkit is intentionally operational. It clarifies responsibilities, communication, student permissions, local flexibility, judging, advancement, and the information that should move between Level Up Civics, the County Office of Education, and participating schools.



1. GUIDING IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLE



CONSISTENT FRAMEWORK. FLEXIBLE LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION.

The student experience, official team rules, Virtual Qualifier requirements, and common judging framework should remain consistent. County Offices of Education may determine how best to recruit schools, support educators, coordinate local events, and manage local procedures.

California's education system places strong emphasis on local capacity, coordinated support, and solutions responsive to local needs. This toolkit follows that same implementation philosophy: provide a clear common structure without requiring every county to operate identically.



2. THE THREE-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP

The Level Up Civics Foundation

- Develops and maintains the Schools Reinventing Counties learning framework and Battle of the Counties competition structure.
- Provides universal guides, competition rules, submission expectations, and judging materials.
- Maintains the official Virtual Qualifier registration/submission process.
- Coordinates common statewide competition communications and advancement framework.
- Supports participating COEs with implementation materials and clarification.
- Coordinates the culminating statewide Battle of the Counties experience and related statewide logistics.
- Does not need to collect or retain local parent/guardian permission or media release forms.

Participating County Office of Education

- Designates a primary county coordinator or point of contact.
- Communicates the opportunity to districts, schools, and relevant county networks.
- Supports educator orientation and local implementation.
- Coordinates or communicates local Minecraft Education access and technical information.
- Helps participating schools understand county and statewide timelines.
- Establishes the local process for student participation permissions and media releases.
- Maintains or directs the appropriate local retention of student permission records rather than forwarding signed forms to Level Up Civics.
- Coordinates county-specific rounds, showcases, or events when applicable.
- Communicates with advancing schools and supports local participation in later rounds.
- May recruit local judges, community partners, speakers, or event support when appropriate.

School / Adult Team Advisor

- Implements the learning experience with students.
- Ensures students understand the challenge and competition expectations.
- Coordinates any school-level process used to select the one official four-student team.
- Ensures required parent/guardian permissions and local student documentation are completed and on file through the appropriate educational agency.
- Supports students in completing the four required parts: Build, Board, NPC, and Virtual Tour.
- Completes the official Virtual Qualifier registration/submission on behalf of the team.
- Serves as the primary communication contact for the team and families.



3. RESPONSIBILITY MATRIX

Responsibility	Level Up Civics	COE	School / Advisor
Learning experience & universal guides	Lead	Support	Implement
County/school outreach	Support	Lead	Participate
Educator orientation	Provide resources	Coordinate / Support	Participate
Minecraft access & local technical readiness	Provide program guidance	Coordinate locally	Confirm readiness
Student participation	—	Support	Lead
Parent/guardian permissions	Does not collect	Set/coordinate local process	Obtain / verify
Retention of signed releases	No	Local determination	Local determination
Official school team selection	—	—	Lead
Virtual Qualifier submission system	Lead	Support	Submit
Universal judging framework	Lead	Support / implement	—
County-specific round or showcase	Support	Lead where applicable	Participate
Advancement communication	Coordinate	Lead local communication	Receive / act
Statewide culmination	Lead / coordinate	Partner	Participate



4. STUDENT PERMISSIONS, PRIVACY & DATA MINIMIZATION

The preferred model is for student permission records to remain with the educational agencies already responsible for serving the students. Level Up Civics does not require signed parent/guardian permission or media release forms to be uploaded with the Virtual Qualifier submission.

Each COE should determine, in coordination with participating districts and schools, which local forms and approvals are required. Existing district, school, or COE forms may be used when they adequately cover the planned participation and media use.



COE VERIFICATION MODEL

The adult team advisor confirms through the official submission that required student permissions are on file with the appropriate school, district, and/or County Office of Education. Signed forms remain local.

Competition videos may contain student names, images, voices, and student-created work. COEs and schools should ensure that public sharing, event photography, recognition, and promotional use are consistent with the permissions they maintain.

If an advancing round requires travel, field-trip authorization, emergency information, or other event-specific documentation, those materials should be handled through the appropriate local educational agency rather than added to the universal Virtual Qualifier submission.



5. BEFORE YOU LAUNCH: COUNTY COORDINATOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Identify the primary COE coordinator and backup contact.
- ☐ Review the Schools Reinventing Counties Player & Educator Guide.
- ☐ Review the Battle of the Counties Competition Guide & FAQ.
- ☐ Review the official Judging Rubric & Judge Guide and the Battle Prompt & Rubric for each challenge your schools will use.
- ☐ Review the SSCE Guide if participating high schools want to connect the work to the State Seal of Civic Engagement.
- ☐ Confirm the county's participating-school outreach plan.
- ☐ Confirm how educators will receive world access and implementation directions.
- ☐ Coordinate with local technology staff on Minecraft Education readiness where needed.
- ☐ Establish the county's student permission and media-release process.
- ☐ Determine whether the county will host any local showcase or additional competition round.
- ☐ Confirm local dates that must occur before statewide deadlines.
- ☐ Identify any county-specific educator training, office hours, or support opportunities.
- ☐ Confirm how advancing schools will be notified and supported.
- ☐ Ensure public communications use the approved program names and Minecraft/Microsoft disclaimer.



6. 2026–27 IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE FRAMEWORK

Each county may establish local dates around the common statewide milestones. The framework below is intended as a planning sequence rather than a substitute for the official master calendar.

Phase	Coordinator Focus
Launch & Awareness	Introduce Schools Reinventing Counties and Battle of the Counties to districts, schools, educators, and relevant networks.
Educator Onboarding	Share guides, world access directions, competition expectations, technical information, and local support.
Student Exploration	Students explore county communities, listen to perspectives, investigate challenges, and begin civic design work.
School-Level Development	Schools may involve many students or teams and determine how they will select one official four-student team.
Virtual Qualifier	Official school teams submit their project information and Virtual Tour (MP4) through the Official Team Submission form on the Level Up Civics website.
Judging & Advancement	Submissions are scored using the Battle Prompt & Rubric for each team's challenge and grade band. Advancement information is coordinated with the COE and adult team advisor.
County / Later Rounds	Participating counties may host local events or additional rounds according to the agreed competition structure.
Statewide Culmination	Advancing elementary, middle, and high school teams participate in the culminating Battle of the Counties experience.



7. COUNTY COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

When communicating with districts and schools, county coordinators should make sure educators can quickly answer:

- ☐ What is Schools Reinventing Counties?
- ☐ What is Battle of the Counties, and is competition participation optional?
- ☐ Which grades and divisions may participate?
- ☐ How many students are on an official team?
- ☐ How many official teams may a school submit?
- ☐ How and when do educators access the Minecraft experience?
- ☐ What must students create?
- ☐ What is submitted for the Virtual Qualifier?
- ☐ What are the county and statewide deadlines?
- ☐ How are student permissions handled locally?
- ☐ How will teams know whether they advance?
- ☐ Who is the county contact for implementation questions?

Recommended Message Hierarchy

Lead with the learning experience first. Schools Reinventing Counties is the civic and community-based learning experience. Battle of the Counties is the optional competition pathway for schools that want an additional audience, challenge, and celebration for student work.



8. WHAT COUNTIES MAY CUSTOMIZE

- Local outreach and recruitment strategy.
- Educator onboarding format and professional learning.
- County-specific office hours or technical support.
- School-level selection recommendations.
- Local showcases, exhibitions, or additional county rounds.
- Local judging logistics, provided the official Battle Prompt & Rubric is used where results determine Battle of the Counties advancement.
- Community partners and authentic audiences.
- Local event schedules and venues.
- Additional district or COE student permission requirements.

What Should Remain Common

- Official competition name and relationship to Schools Reinventing Counties.
- Four students per official team.
- One official team per school.
- Elementary grades 3–5, middle grades 6–8, and high school grades 9–12 divisions.
- Mixed grades only within the same division.
- Virtual Qualifier submission expectations.
- Virtual Tour of 3 minutes or less, with every team member's voice, submitted as an MP4.
- The four common judging criteria (1–4 each, 16 points) and civic-design emphasis.
- Required brand/compliance language and Minecraft/Microsoft disclaimer.



9. COUNTY JUDGING & ADVANCEMENT

When a county uses judging to determine advancement within Battle of the Counties, judges should use the Judging Rubric & Judge Guide together with the Battle Prompt & Rubric for each team's challenge and grade band. Every rubric scores four criteria from 1 to 4, for 16 points: the challenge, learning and evidence, design and creativity, and communication and team voice.

Technical Minecraft skill and video production quality are not scored on their own. County coordinators should orient judges to the grade-band rubrics and conflict-of-interest expectations before scoring begins.

Later-round formats may vary by county. Any local additions should preserve a fair pathway to advancement and should be communicated to participating schools before the applicable round.



10. QUESTIONS & ISSUE ESCALATION

County coordinators should serve as the first point of contact for local school implementation questions. Questions involving universal competition rules, statewide submission requirements, common judging guidance, or statewide culmination logistics should be elevated to Level Up Civics.

Question Type	First Contact	Escalate When Needed To
School implementation / local dates	COE	Level Up Civics if universal rule is affected
Minecraft sign-in / device / network	School or district IT	COE / applicable platform support
Student permission / local media policy	School / district / COE	Local legal/privacy leadership as appropriate
Virtual Qualifier requirements	COE	Level Up Civics
Judging / advancement / statewide event	COE	Level Up Civics



11. CORE RESOURCE SET

- Schools Reinventing Counties: Player & Educator Guide
- Battle of the Counties: Competition Guide & FAQ
- Battle of the Counties: Judging Rubric & Judge Guide
- Battle of the Counties: Battle Prompts & Rubrics (one for each challenge and grade band)
- Schools Reinventing Counties & the California State Seal of Civic Engagement (SSCE Guide)
- Official Team Submission (Virtual Qualifier)
- County-specific world access and implementation directions
- County-specific calendar or event information, where applicable

COEs may create supplemental local materials, but educators should always have access to the current universal documents so that competition expectations remain consistent.



12. COORDINATOR FAQ

Does every school have to compete?

No. Schools Reinventing Counties may be used without entering Battle of the Counties.

Does Level Up Civics collect signed student permission forms?

No. Required parent/guardian permissions and media releases remain with the appropriate school, district, and/or COE under the local process.

Can a county use its existing media release?

Yes, if the county determines that its existing process adequately covers the planned student participation and media uses.

Can a school involve more than four students?

Yes. Schools may involve many students or teams locally. The official Battle of the Counties team submitted by the school consists of four students.

Can a county create its own local round?

Yes. County-specific rounds, showcases, and events may vary. Universal team, submission, and judging requirements should remain consistent where they determine official advancement.

Do teams send their Minecraft world files to Level Up Civics?

No. The Virtual Qualifier uses the project information and the team's Virtual Tour (MP4), which should show and explain the build, Board, and NPC.

Who communicates advancement to schools?

Level Up Civics and the participating COE coordinate advancement information, with the adult team advisor serving as the school-level contact.



13. PROGRAM & BRAND INFORMATION

Schools Reinventing Counties is the Minecraft Education learning experience. Battle of the Counties is the optional competition pathway. The Level Up Civics Foundation develops and organizes the initiative. Minecraft Education is the software platform used by students and educators.



NAMING MATTERS

Do not combine the two program names into a single title or describe Minecraft Education, Microsoft, or Mojang as a partner, sponsor, host, or endorsing organization unless a separate written agreement explicitly authorizes that representation.



NOT AN OFFICIAL MINECRAFT OR MINECRAFT EDUCATION PROGRAM OR EVENT

Not approved by or associated with Mojang or Microsoft. County coordinators should ensure that locally created flyers, websites, presentations, event signage, and partner communications use the approved naming structure and required disclaimer.

Implementation Note

This toolkit establishes the common 2026–27 pilot framework. County-specific operational details should be documented separately and shared with participating schools. Nothing in this toolkit replaces local district or COE requirements related to student privacy, permissions, technology, field trips, events, or other agency procedures.