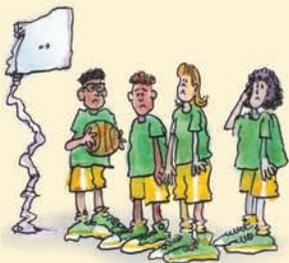


PROJECT **Citizen**
A PORTFOLIO-BASED CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAM



We the People: PROJECT Citizen

A Portfolio-Based Civic Education Program



We the People: Project Citizen is a curricular program for middle, secondary, and post-secondary students and adult groups that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government. The program helps people learn how to monitor and influence public policy. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy.

Classes or groups of students or members of youth organizations work cooperatively to identify a public policy problem in their community. They then research the problem, evaluate alternative solutions, develop their own solution in the form of a public policy, and create a political action plan to enlist local or state authorities to adopt their proposed policy. Participants develop a portfolio of their work and may present their project in a hearing showcase before a panel of civic-minded community members.

The **Project Citizen** program is administered by the Center for Civic Education with the assistance of a national network of coordinators in every state.

Curriculum



Project Citizen focuses on the role of state and local governments in the U.S. federal system. The curriculum involves a class of students or members of youth or adult groups in a series of structured, cooperative-learning activities that are guided by teachers, organization leaders, and adult volunteers. Working in cooperative teams, the students learn to interact with their government through a five-step process that includes the following:

- Identifying a problem in their community that requires a public policy solution
- Gathering and evaluating information on the problem
- Examining and evaluating alternative solutions
- Developing a proposed public policy to address the problem
- Creating an action plan to get their policy adopted by government

Students' work is displayed in a portfolio containing a display board section and a documentation section.

Contact

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Program Materials



There are two levels of **Project Citizen** program materials; each level includes a process-oriented student text. Level 1 is most appropriate for middle school students and Level 2 for secondary or post-secondary students. The teacher's guide for each level includes directions for leading students through a multi-step process in which they conduct research on a community problem and propose a public policy solution. The teacher's guide provides instructions for developing a class portfolio and preparing for a simulated public hearing.

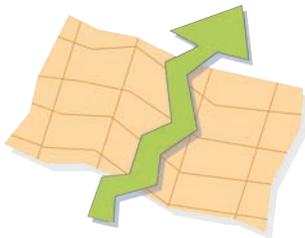
Public Hearings



Throughout the country, students showcase their work during a culminating state event. In Minnesota, the event is held at the State Capitol in May where each portfolio is displayed in the Rotunda. Each of the groups prepares and presents a statement describing all four sections of the portfolio before a panel of community representatives who act as legislative or administrative committee members. Each group then answers questions posed by the committee members. The format provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of how public policy is formulated while providing teachers with an excellent means of assessing performance.

Every year, leaders of each state's **Project Citizen** program designate one exemplary middle school portfolio from their state to send to the annual **Project Citizen** National Showcase. Legislators, staff, and other adult volunteers from across the nation serve as evaluators, determining the level of achievement attained by each portfolio.

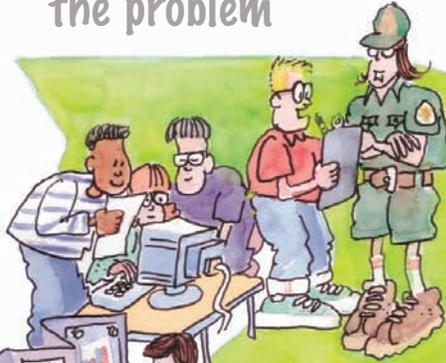
Effectiveness



Independent studies of the effects of the **Project Citizen** program reveal that it has a significant impact on the civic knowledge of young people, their civic skills, and their propensity to participate in civic and political life. These studies can be found in the Research section of the Center for Civic Education's website.

Problem

identify
the problem



gather
information



examine
solutions



propose
public policy



develop an
action plan

Solution

Minnesota Standards

Grade Five

Civics

- 5.1.1.1.2 Identify a public problem in the school or community, analyze the issue from multiple perspectives, and create an action plan to address it. For example: Public problem— Students litter while walking to school; balls from the playground land in neighbors' yards

English Language Arts

- 5.2.2.2 Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.
- 5.2.3.3 Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
- 5.2.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.
- 5.2.7.7 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- 5.2.9.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
- 5.6.1.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
- 5.6.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 5.6.7.7 Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- 5.6.8.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.
- 5.6.9.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- 5.8.4.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; avoid plagiarism by identifying sources; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Grade Six

Civics

- 6.1.1.1.1 Evaluate arguments about selected issues from diverse perspectives and frames of reference, noting the strengths, weaknesses and consequences associated with the decision made on each issue.
- 6.1.1.1.2 Use graphic data to analyze information about a public issue in state or local government.
- 6.1.1.1.3 Address a state or local policy issue by identifying key opposing positions, determining conflicting values and beliefs, defending and justifying a position with evidence, and developing strategies to persuade others to adopt this position.

English Language Arts

- 6.5.1.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- 6.5.2.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- 6.5.7.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
- 6.5.8.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
- 6.7.1.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - a. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
 - b. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
 - d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.
- 6.7.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 6.7.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.
- 6.7.8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.
- 6.9.3.3 Delineate a speaker's argument, specific claims, and intended audience, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
- 6.9.4.4 Present claims and findings, respect intellectual properties, sequence ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.