Project Citizen

A project-based civic engagement model

PROJECT CITIZEN OVERVIEW AND SHOWCASE

Project Citizen is a nonpartisan, project-based learning civic engagement model that helps students solve community problems through the research and development of public policy alternatives. Middle and high school students identify a problem in their communities; research the problem and corresponding policy alternatives to solve the problem effectively; select or create a policy that best resolves the problem; and prepare an action plan with the steps needed to have the policy enacted and implemented by the government. Students prepare a traditional or digital portfolio and may present their proposals before panels of judges at the district and state levels.

In the classroom, teachers provide the framework for the problem-solving exercise and evaluate student work throughout the process. This is a great end of year project for students to demonstrate their civic knowledge. To successfully complete the project, students will need to know the branches and levels of government, public institutions and governmental processes, types of public policy, civic engagement strategies, how to evaluate the constitutionality of public policy proposals, and the role of the citizen in influencing public policy.

Florida Project Citizen Showcase Format

The Project Citizen State Showcase will consist of two phases:

Phase 1: Evaluation of the Project Citizen Portfolios (Traditional and Digital)

Phase 2: Mock Legislative Oral Hearings (In-person and via video conferencing.) The hearings are an optional component.

Upon completion of the project in the classroom, portfolios may advance to the district or state levels directly, depending on the availability of local showcase options. Please check with your district social studies supervisors to determine if local showcase options exist. Miami-Dade County and St. Lucie County have excellent models for district-level Project Citizen showcases. Districts may offer showcases like History Fair where all middle school classes submit portfolios and then present their portfolios in a showcase where judges walk from table to table and ask the students questions about their projects. Other models like the state-level showcase are also available to provide opportunities for students to present a formal presentation aligned with their portfolio panels. Guidelines are provided. Districts with

multiple entries may submit three middle school and three high school portfolios to advance to the state showcase. See entry submission details below. Portfolios will be judged for state awards and possible advancement to the national competition.

State Showcase Procedures

During Phase 1, the evaluators will assess the portfolios submitted by the schools. The top portfolios will advance to the state showcase on the campus of Florida Southern College in late May. Students are permitted to attend and participate in the oral hearing component if desired. Otherwise, the portfolios will advance to be evaluated at the showcase for possible advancement to nationals.

At the state showcase, evaluators/judges will review and score the portfolios prior to the arrival of the classes at the Oral Hearings State Showcase site. A scoring rubric and scoresheet with assessment criteria will be provided. Judges will participate in an orientation and training. After Phase 1 is completed, the evaluators will assess the students' oral presentations during the Mock Legislative Hearing component. This can be done in-person or by video conference. The oral hearings are an optional component.

State level awards will include best overall portfolio and best overall oral hearing components. Other awards may be presented as designated by the State Coordinator. Only the portfolio advances to the national finals so the team winning the Best Overall Portfolio will have their project sent to the national showcase at the middle and high school levels.

Team Composition and Hearing Procedures

Each class may only bring up to eight (8) students to participate in the Oral Hearings State Showcase. These students must be divided to address each panel of the portfolio components. Two students will address panel one to highlight the problem selected by the class and the corresponding research and evidence documenting the problem. Two students will present the second panel to highlight the public policy alternatives researched by the class to resolve the selected problem. Two students will present panel three to highlight the class policy drafted or chosen by the class. Finally, two students will present the class action plan to demonstrate their strategies for implementing their public policy.

The purpose of the mock legislative oral hearing is to provide opportunities for students to present and defend reasoned positions on public issues. Each class will present a four-minute prepared oral presentation for each of the four portfolio panel groups. Students may bring notes on index cards to help with their presentation, but they should NOT read verbatim from the notes or the portfolio display. It is

always best to have bullet points as opposed to sentences so the presentation will be more conversational, and students can maintain eye contact with the judges. Students are encouraged to use graphics from the display to help explain or emphasize a point. Students may only use materials included in the display during the presentation. Groups should practice their oral presentations to conform to the time requirements for each panel.

The evaluators will begin the mock legislative oral hearings by introducing themselves to the students and asking the students from the portfolio panel groups to come forward and introduce themselves. There is flexibility with this model so if students have practiced a different way to present introductions, they may present in a manner they are most comfortable.

The groups should present in consecutive order by panel. **The judges will not ask questions until all panel presentations have concluded.** Each panel is allowed four minutes to present (four minutes per panel, NOT four minutes per student) for a total presentation time of 16 minutes for the full presentation by all students. Following the presentation of all four panels, the judges will ask follow- up questions for ten minutes. This is an opportunity for students to clarify, expand, and defend the positions stated in their opening presentations. Students MAY NOT USE notes during the follow-up period, although they may refer to the portfolio display. The entire class will stand with their portfolio during the follow-up period.

At the conclusion of the mock legislative oral hearings, evaluators will give the class some concise feedback about their presentations for up to five minutes. An official timekeeper will keep track of the time during the mock legislative oral hearings. The time limits for the mock legislative oral hearings are as follows.

Portfolio Group One: Four (4) minutes

Portfolio Group Two: Four (4) minutes

Portfolio Group Three: Four (4) minutes

Portfolio Group Four: Four (4) minutes

Follow-up Questions: Ten (10) minutes

Feedback and Critique: Up to five (5) minutes

Using these time limits, each oral hearing presentation and follow-up questioning period should take approximately twenty-six minutes (26) to complete. The total time for each class will be up to thirty-one (31) minutes including feedback. A sample oral hearing score sheet is attached. This provides a good framework for what should be covered in the mock legislative hearing presentation. For additional details, contact Annette Boyd Pitts at apitts@flsouthern.edu.

The Project Citizen Model

The Project Citizen model consists of the development of a portfolio to showcase the students' work, and participation in an optional mock legislative hearing to present the portfolio. There are four specific elements to the portfolio and presentation. Students identify a problem in their communities; research public policy alternatives to solve the problem; select or create the best public policy solution to resolve the identified problem; and create an action plan with the steps needed to have the policy enacted and implemented by the government. Students display their work in a traditional portfolio with four panels or a digital portfolio. The presentation and corresponding portfolio should incorporate the following components.

The Problem

Students should start with the problem statement. It should be concrete. They should explain the problem and why it is important. The students should document how widespread the problem is and how serious. Students should include why this problem should be handled by the government. What level of government will address this problem and what agencies may be involved? Students should examine if there are any existing laws or policies currently addressing this problem and why they may be inadequate.

Alternative Policies

Students should identify several alternative policies they have researched addressing the problem. These alternative policies may be existing policies or policies currently being proposed by other groups or entities. The students may also draft their own policy solutions. For each identified policy alternative, students should identify who is proposing the policy, who supports and doesn't support each policy, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.

Proposed Policy Solution

In panel three, students will identify the public policy solution they think will be the best solution to their problem. This can be one of the policies highlighted in panel two, a combination or adaptation of existing policies, or it can be an original idea. The students should explain why this policy is constitutional and why it does not violate the United States Constitution or the Florida Constitution. They should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed policy. Additionally, students should know the level of government responsible for adopting the policy and the agencies that may be involved with implementation.

Action Plan

Students will develop and present an action plan to get the policy adopted by the appropriate governmental body or agency. They will identify people or groups that may support or oppose the policy and examine how they may garner additional support. The action plan should include the steps needed to have the policy enacted and implemented by the government.

Size Requirements for Portfolios

Portfolios may be submitted in one of two specific formats. Traditional portfolios should have four panels addressing each of the previously identified components. The class should select a clever title for their presentation as the heading for the portfolio. The presentation portfolio will be similar to a history fair portfolio. The size requirements are as follows. Each panel should be no larger than 32 inches by 40 inches. Foam core panels are light and easy to work with and decorate. The four panels must fold flat. See visuals provided. No three-dimensional items are permitted on the boards. Panels can be hinged with Velcro strips. Use the Portfolio Criteria Checklist to ensure your portfolio includes all required information. Don't forget to include a clever title on your portfolio.

A binder is also required to accompany the portfolio. The binder should include sections corresponding to the portfolio but will contain additional materials and research resources and documentation.

Don't forget to include bibliographies and reflections! Use this interactive model portfolio to review what is important to include in the portfolio and the binder.

http://www.civiced.org/digitalPortfolio/index.php?page=Home

Digital Portfolio Entries

Classes may elect to submit a digital portfolio as opposed to a traditional portfolio. Digital portfolios may be submitted in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, Prezi, Wiki Project, Padlet, or other models. The materials should conform to the traditional portfolio components and provide all relevant materials but in a digital format.

Digital portfolios may integrate a variety of visual and graphic components as well as animations and video elements. Students may record short audio or video clips explaining their work if desired.

Correlation to Florida State Standards in Civics and Government

Project Citizen aligns to the State of Florida Standards in Civics and Government. At the middle school level, here are the most relevant benchmarks in the middle school standards.

Civics and Government Standard 2: Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens, and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.

SS.7.C.2.12: Develop a plan to resolve a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, etc.

SS.7.C.3.13: Examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

Resources

Project Citizen is administered nationally by the Center for Civic Education. In Florida, the program is administered by the Justice Teaching Center for Civic Learning on the campus of Florida Southern College. This is a statewide program and al districts are invited to participate.

For further details contact, Annette Pitts at apitts@flsouthern.edu. Resources to help schools participate in Project Citizen are listed below.

How to create a portfolio

http://www.civiced.org/digitalPortfolio/

http://www.civiced.org/pc-program/resources/resource-center

http://www.civiced.org/digitalPortfolio/index.php?page=binder

Submission of Entries:

All portfolios are due at Florida Southern College on April 15, 2020.

Portfolios selected to advance to the state showcase will be notified by April 24, 2020.

The state showcase and mock legislative hearings will be held on the campus of Florida Southern College in late May 2020.

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