

PROJECT Citizen
A PORTFOLIO-BASED CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

Center for Civic Education



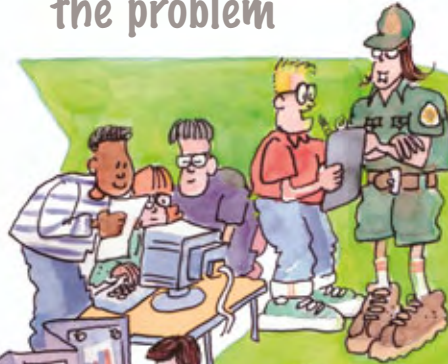
National Conference of State Legislatures



Problem



identify
the problem



gather
information

examine
solutions



propose
public policy



develop an
action plan

Solution

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.

Entire classes 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 present their project in a hearing showcase before a panel of civic-minded community members.

The **Project Citizen** program is administered with the assistance of a national network of state and congressional district coordinators in every state and is conducted with the assistance of the National Conference of State Legislatures. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. Additional funding at the state level is also provided by an increasing number of state legislatures.

Curriculum



Project Citizen focuses on the role of state and local governments in the U.S. federal system. The curriculum involves an entire 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 four cooperative teams, the students learn to interact with their government through a five-step process that includes

- 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 class portfolio containing a display section and a documentation section.

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



Participating teachers and organization leaders are encouraged to hold a showcase hearing as the culminating activity for **Project Citizen**. Each of the four working groups prepares and presents a statement on its section 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 **Project Citizen** program designate one exemplary middle-school portfolio from their state to send to the annual **Project Citizen** National Showcase. This culminating event is held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). State 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.

You Can Get Involved



The Center for Civic Education administers **Project Citizen** nationally through a network of state and congressional district coordinators in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These coordinators work with government officials, business and community leaders, and local educators to contribute to the success of the program.

Teachers and youth group leaders can

- contact their state coordinator (see directory in this brochure) or the Center for Civic Education to involve their students in **Project Citizen**
- enlist state and local government officials, community and business leaders, and other educators to assist students in preparing their portfolios and serve as evaluators, speakers, and presenters at portfolio and hearing showcases

Government officials can

- sign and present award certificates, speak at portfolio and hearing showcases, serve as evaluators, and welcome students to their offices
- discuss public policy issues with students in their classrooms and speak at teacher training workshops
- support the efforts of the local and state coordinators in all aspects of program implementation

Community, business, and professional associations can

- volunteer time and expertise by serving on advisory committees, providing leadership support, and serving as portfolio and hearing showcase evaluators
- provide financial support to help purchase program materials, underwrite local and statewide showcases, and send classes to local and state events

Contact



For more information on participating in the **Project Citizen** program, contact your state coordinator listed in this brochure. You may also contact:

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