Project Citizen is a process-based program that actively engages students in identifying, researching, and trying to implement solutions to public policy problems, often focusing on an issue in their particular community. Developed by the Center for Civic Education, Project Citizen offers students the opportunity to apply the skills of active citizenship in the real world and promotes competent and responsible participation in public policy-making. Students choose the problem they work on and are invested in the successful completion of their project. The process systematically involves students in:

- Understanding public policy
- Identifying a public policy problem students want to work on
- Gathering and evaluating information about the problem
- Examining and evaluating possible solutions
- Identifying the best solution and explaining why it is the best solution
- Developing an action plan to implement the solution chosen
- Presenting the project to the appropriate public body for action
- Reflecting on the learning experience

The methods of research, including interviewing people, are clearly presented in the Project Citizen textbook. Teachers use the process-oriented text to create an interdisciplinary project that involves civics, math, technology, language arts, and art and may include science. It is a natural starting point for an effective service-learning project, providing the research and community outreach opportunities necessary for an effective educational experience. High-quality professional development is a key component of the Project Citizen program.

Teachers and students who have participated in this evidence-based program consistently rate it as one of the most effective they have experienced. Students doing projects using the approach of Project Citizen were actively engaged in learning. They learned more and retained more. They improved their writing and communication skills as well as their commitment to peaceful social change. They missed fewer days of school. Research has shown the effectiveness and enduring impact of Project Citizen.

There have been 19 different in-house and independent assessments of the Project Citizen program. The most recent report by the RMC Research Corporation in 2007 found statistically significant greater gains among participants than comparison students in their knowledge of public policy. Student participating in Project Citizen also demonstrated superior writing ability in articulating, researching, and advocating policy solutions in essays addressing public policy problems. (See [http://www.civiced.org/pdfs/PC/pcOnePager2007.pdf](http://www.civiced.org/pdfs/PC/pcOnePager2007.pdf).) NJEA’s Classroom Close-Up showcased Project Citizen in 2011, including interviews with students and teachers. The video can be found at [http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid616303324001?bctid=671097321001](http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid616303324001?bctid=671097321001).

The annual New Jersey State Project Citizen digital Showcase for classes of students in grades 4-12 will be held on Friday, June 5, 2020.