Selecting a Public Policy Problem

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- *Project Citizen* is a public-policy, process-based program to help students grades 3-12 learn about the political process and to develop a commitment to active citizenship

- Provides the knowledge and skills required for effective citizenship participation

- Involves students in learning about and improving their communities

- Develops an understanding of the importance of citizenship participation

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PROJECT Citizen

A study by the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas found that students who participated in *Project Citizen*:

- developed a greater understanding of the complexity of public policy
- developed a commitment to active citizenship
- learned important communication skills

Identify possible problems for class study

Students identify possible problems

Issues may range from local to global, such as:

- A school policy
- An unsafe street corner
- Teenage vaping
- Unemployment during the pandemic
- High costs of pharmaceuticals
- Income Inequality
- Environmental degradation
- Climate change

Select a problem to study

- Have your students gather some basic information about each problem

- For each problem, determine whether it is important and whether a solution is feasible

Is it important?

- You are bothered by something that is not being done right, needs to be changed, or deserves the attention of policy-makers.

- Are there others who also believe that the problem is an important one?

- Are important values or resources threatened?

- Who created this problem and, equally important, who can do something about it?

- **Consider four factors:** *scope*, *intensity, duration and resources*.

Is it important? Are human rights involved?

Our ideal of public education is one in which students are engaged in reflection and action that constantly encourages them to move America toward a "truer" democratic society, in which all people have enforceable, inalienable rights.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Art. 1—All human beings are free and equal

Art. 2—No distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status

Art. 3—Right to life, liberty and personal security

Art. 4—Freedom from slavery

Art. 5—Freedom from torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Art. 6—Right to recognition as person before the law

Art. 7—Right to equal protection of the law

Art. 8—Right to effective remedy by competent national tribunals

Art. 9—Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile

Art. 10—Right to fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal

Art. 11—Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty

Art. 12—Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy

Art. 13—Freedom of movement

Art. 14—Right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution

Art. 15—Right to nationality

Art. 16—Right to marriage and family

Art. 17—Right to own property

Art. 18—Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Art. 19—Freedom of opinion and expression

Art. 20—Freedom of peaceful assembly and association

Art. 21—Right to take part in government

Art. 22—Right to social security

Art. 23—Right to work, free choice of employment, equal pay for equal work, join trade unions

Art. 24—Right to rest and leisure

Art. 25—Right to adequate standard of living for health and well-being of self and family

Art. 26—Right to education

Art. 27—Right to participate in cultural life of the community

Art. 28—Social and international order in which rights can be fully realized

Art. 29—Duties to the community

Human Rights

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights https://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/documents/udhr_translations/eng.pdf

- Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not itself enforceable, international treaties protecting individuals and groups against human rights abuses are enforceable by requiring reparations.

- HRE USA offers a series of lesson and ideas about teaching human rights at https://hreusa.org/

Is it feasible?

- Is there enough information available?

- Is the problem narrow enough for students to be able to address it?

Is it important/feasible?

- Violence on school campuses

- Budget cuts in school funding

Consider:

- – Scope?
- – Intensity?
- – Duration?
- – Resources at stake?
- – Human rights involved?
- – Information available?
- – Sufficiently narrow?

Select a problem to study

Gather Information

- Identify sources of information
- Public policy makers and interest groups
- Telephone calls
- Interviews
- Letters
- Libraries, newspapers, websites

Federalism and Separation of Powers

	Executive	Legislative	Judicial
National Government	President	Congress: Senate and House of Representatives	• U.S. Supreme Court • Appellate Courts • Federal District Courts
State Government	Governor	State Legislature: Senate and Assembly	• NJ State Supreme Court • NJ Appellate Courts • NJ Superior Courts (by County)
County Government	County Executive President	County Board of Commissioners	No separate courts (see above)
Municipal Government	Mayor	Town council	Municipal courts (limited jurisdiction)
School Board	Superintendent	School Board	Administrative Office of the Courts—Commissioner of Education

Federalism and Separation of Powers

Problem	Air pollution	Gender Pay discrimination	Homeless	Gun control	Immigration
Level of Government	State and Federal	State and Federal	Local, state and federal	State and Federal	Federal
Agency	EPA DEP	State Legislature and Governor Congress and President			

Project Citizen materials are available:
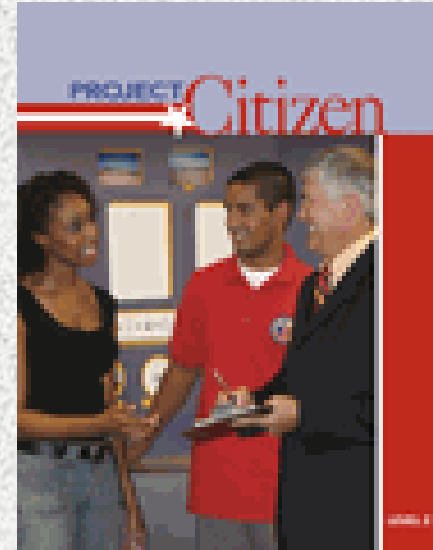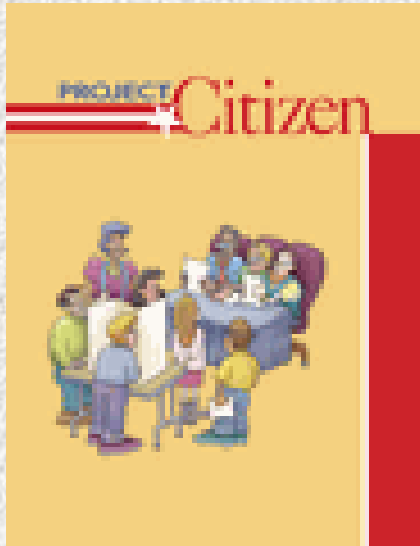
- For middle school (yellow) and high school (blue) classes
- From the Center for Civic Education
- https://store.civiced.org/projectcitizen.html

http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid61630332400
1?bctid=671097321001

- ***Project Citizen*** lends itself to inquiry-based learning, on-line student work as well as interdisciplinary work

- It takes a minimum of 6 weeks, or one day a week for four months, to do a project

- If you have any questions, contact Arlene Gardner at arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu or Robert O'Dell at ro205@scarletmail.rutgers.edu