

Project Citizen

A program of the
Center for Civic Education

in cooperation with the
National Conference of State Legislatures

supported by the
United States Department of Education
and the New Hampshire Bar Association

What is Project Citizen?

- Education for democratic citizenship
- Teaches students to monitor and influence public policy
- Interdisciplinary instructional program for adolescents
 - Focuses on state and local government
 - Applies learning to real world issues
 - Uses cooperative learning

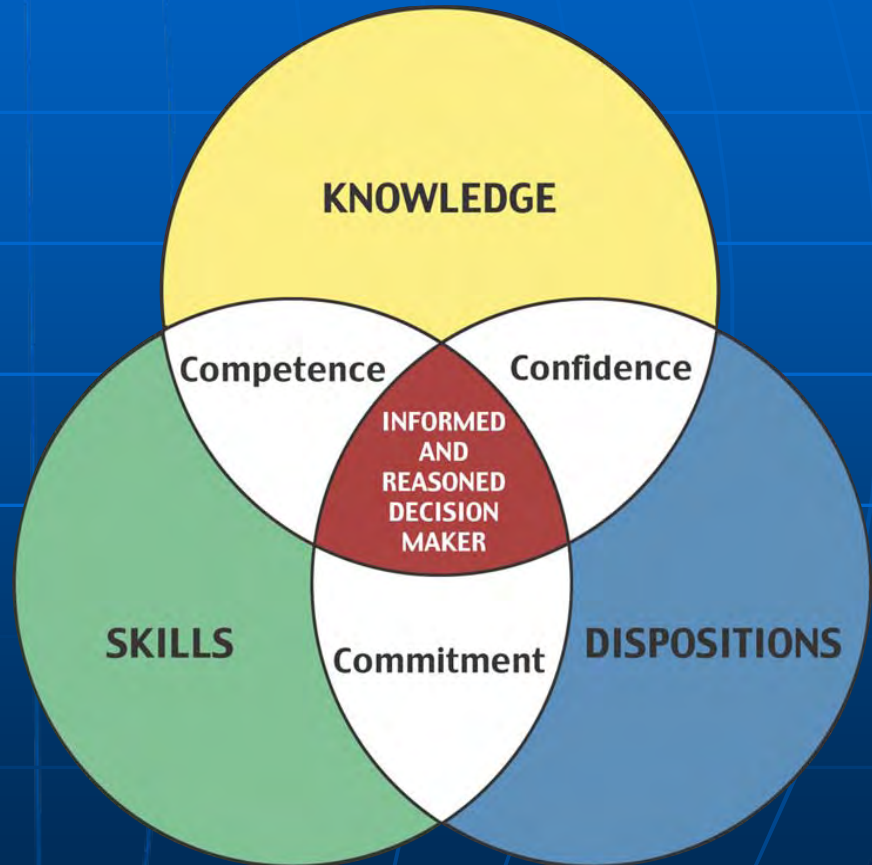
What are the Goals of Project Citizen?

The primary goal of Project Citizen is to develop in students a commitment to active citizenship and governance by

- providing the knowledge and skills required for effective citizenship
- providing practical experience
- developing an understanding of the importance of citizen participation

What are the Educational Outcomes of Project Citizen?

- Civic Knowledge
- Civic Skills
 - Intellectual
 - Participatory
- Civic Dispositions
 - Democratic values and principles
 - Reasoned commitment



What is Public Policy?

Public policy can be defined as the agreed upon ways that government fulfills its responsibilities to protect the rights of individuals and to promote the general welfare by solving problems.

What is Public Policy?

Public policies are contained in laws, rules, regulations, decisions, and practices created by

- executive, legislative, and judicial branches
- government bureaucracies
- regulatory agencies
- other public decision-making bodies

Project Citizen Steps

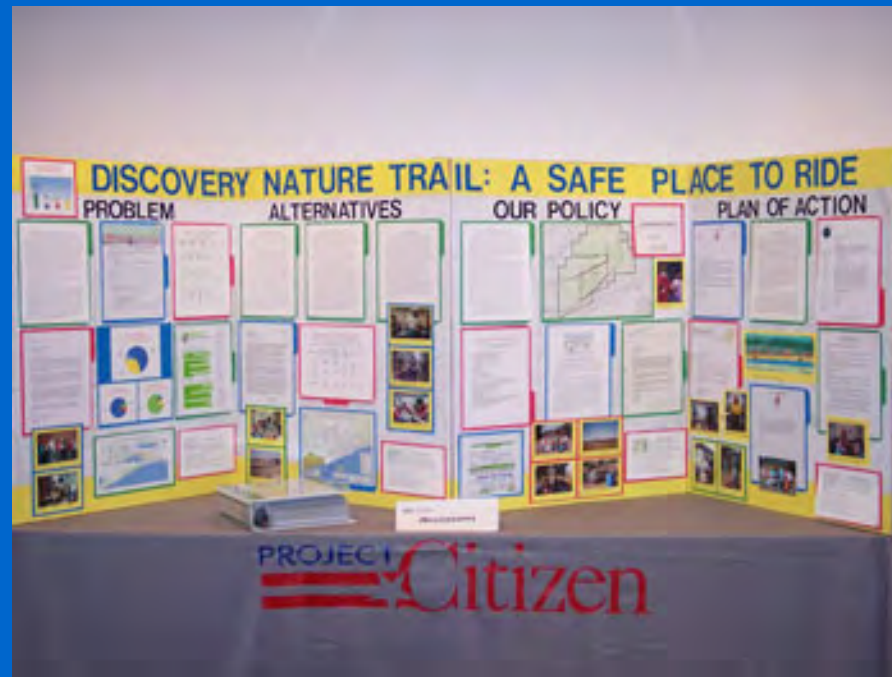
1. Identify and agree upon a problem to study
2. Research and evaluate possible solutions
3. Reach a consensus on which solution would be best
4. Create an Action plan designed to implement your public policy

Portfolio

alternative policies

class policy

problem



action plan

What Criteria is Used to Select a Problem?

- 1) Is the problem you selected important to you and other people in your community? (scope and intensity)
- 2) Does government have some responsibility to deal with this problem?
- 3) Will there be sufficient information about the problem to develop a good project?
- 4) Is there a realistic possibility of solving the problem selected?

Project Citizen- Step 1

Identifying public policy problems in communities

- Traffic Issues
- School hours, scheduling
- Environmental concerns
- Driving Laws
- Bus Safety

Project Citizen Step 2

- Gather information on your selected topic
- Research the scope and intensity of the problem
- Research alternative solutions to the problem
- Write letters, conduct interviews, take opinion polls

Project Citizen Step 3

- Analyze the information
- Compare sources
- Weigh pros and cons of possible solutions
- Determine which branch/level of government would be most appropriate to address the issue

Project Citizen Step 4

- Your class, or group must reach a consensus on which possible solution is best
- Emphasize the process: consensus vs. majority rule
- Critical thinking: weighing alternatives and taking stand

Project Citizen Step 5

- Create an Action Plan for trying to implement your proposed public policy
- Letters, petitions, phone calls or visits to local officials, brochures...

The Product

- Each phase of the project includes reading for information
- Writing summaries: one essay each board
- Polls: graphs of results
- T-charts of pros and cons
- Letters, brochures, petitions...
- Oral presentation (optional)

- Reflecting on the Learning Experience

Acquiring Civic Knowledge

- Exercising the rights of citizens
- Fulfilling the responsibilities of citizens
- Learning the responsibilities of public officials
- Learning the purposes of democratic government
- Learning the organization & procedures of government
- Learning the role of civil society

Step 6 - Reflecting

Developing Civic Skills

- Intellectual skills
 - identify
 - describe
 - explain
 - evaluate a position
 - take a position
 - defend a position

Step 6 - Reflecting

Developing Civic Skills

- Participatory skills
 - capacity to influence policies and decisions by working with others
 - clearly articulate interests and make them known to key decision and policymakers
 - building coalitions, negotiating, compromising and seeking consensus
 - managing conflict

Step 6 - Reflecting

Experiencing Underlying Values and Principles

- Values
 - Individual rights
 - Life
 - Liberty
 - Justice
 - Equality
 - Diversity
 - Truth
 - Common good

Step 6 - Reflecting

Experiencing Underlying Values and Principles

- Principles
 - Popular sovereignty
 - Constitutional government
 - Rule of law
 - Separation of powers
 - Checks and balances
 - Minority rights
 - Judicial review

Step 6 - Reflecting

Fostering traits of character

- Open mindedness
- Critical thinking
- Negotiation and compromise
- Persistence
- Compassion
- Patriotism

Key Findings

- Students believe they can make a difference in their communities
- Students do make a difference in their communities
- Students develop greater understanding of public policy
- Students develop greater understanding of challenges facing policymakers
- Students learn how their government works