

The Project Citizen Portfolio Showcase is the culmination of an interactive civic education program designed to actively engage adolescents in the civic life of their communities. In Project Citizen, the group of participating young people identify and analyze issues and problems facing their community (school, neighborhood, town/city, state). They select one of these issues or problems for detailed study. After they complete their research, they propose a public policy to deal with that issue or problem. Finally, they develop an action plan detailing the steps to take to have their public policy proposal adopted by the appropriate governmental authorities. Then, the class develops a portfolio based on their research.

To develop the Project Citizen portfolio, the students (or members of a youth organization) are subdivided into four groups, one group for each section of the portfolio. The primary responsibility of each group is shown below.

Portfolio Group One	Explaining the problem
Portfolio Group Two	Examining alternative policies
Portfolio Group Three	Proposing a public policy
Portfolio Group Four	Developing an action plan

The following information has been prepared to assist you in evaluating each of the components of the portfolio. The portfolio has two components: a display component and a documentation component. The two components taken together constitute the portfolio that you will evaluate. For this purpose, you will use the "Portfolio Criteria Checklist" (Appendix G Handouts 12 and 13) and the "Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet" (Appendix D). The Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet has five parts: four parts list the evaluation criteria for each section of the portfolio and one part gives the criteria for an overall evaluation of the students' work.

The information below corresponds to the four major sections that comprise the display component and the documentation binder.

Display section

The first display section should provide a detailed explanation of the issue/problem chosen and why the class selected it. A one- to two-page written summary should include a clear description of the issue/problem and what the class learned about it. Relevant graphs, photos, illustrations, and/or cartoons should be included. The students should cite all sources they used.

The written summary should be posted on the display and should include the following information:

- a clear statement of the nature of the issue or problem the students chose to research
- the degree of seriousness and scope of the issue/problem
- the level(s) of government or the government agencies that have responsibility for handling the issue/problem
- an indication of individuals or groups that might share responsibility for dealing with the issue/problem
- an indication of disagreements about the issue/problem in the community
- whether there is an existing policy to deal with the problem
- if a policy exists, an explanation about its adequacy

Documentation binder

In the first section of the binder, the students must document their research including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work. Examples might include the following items:

- a completed "Problem Identification and Analysis Form" (Appendix G)
- a summary of the completed interview forms (or, representative examples)
- relevant newspaper and/or magazine articles
- completed radio, television, or printed source forms if applicable
- other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

Display section

The second display section should provide a detailed explanation and evaluation of two or three alternative public policy proposals from various groups or individuals. If an existing policy is in place, it should be included with an explanation of its effectiveness. Relevant graphs, photos, illustrations, and/or cartoons should be included. The students should cite all sources they used.

The display should include a one-page written summary for each alternative public policy they present. Each summary should include the following information:

- if one exists, an explanation of the current public policy and an evaluation of its effectiveness (advantages and disadvantages)
- a detailed explanation of an alternative public policy/solution and its strengths and weaknesses (advantages and disadvantages) with supporting data
- identification of the source of the proposed public policy (e.g., individual citizen, special interest group, legislature, or city council)

Documentation binder

In the second section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work. Examples might include the following items:

- a copy of the full text of the policy if one is currently in place
- letters or memos from special interest groups or individuals
- publicity material circulating in the community
- other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

Display section

The third display section should clearly explain a specific public policy proposal to address the issue/problem and the reasons that the class has agreed to support it. The class may choose to support an existing policy, modify an existing policy, create a new policy, or support one of the alternative policies described in the second display panel. Graphs, photos, illustrations, and/or cartoons should be displayed. The students should cite all sources used.

The display should contain a one- to two-page written summary that includes the following:

- An explanation of the public policy the class is proposing and a justification for how that public policy will best deal with the issue/problem.
- The advantages and disadvantages of the public policy, supported with current data including identification of individuals or groups that may be affected by it and what the possible impact would be.
- A rationale statement that also identifies the appropriate branch of government or agency that would be responsible for implementing the proposed public policy.
- An opinion statement on why the proposed public policy does not violate the U.S. or state constitutions.

Documentation binder

In the third section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work. Examples might include the following items:

- a completed copy of the "Constitutional Opinion Form"
- any laws, regulations, and/or rules that may apply
- a copy of an existing policy or law, or models of new or modified law or policy
- other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

Display section

The fourth display section of the portfolio should provide a detailed description of the process necessary to get the proposed public policy adopted and implemented by the appropriate government branch or agency. The plan should include steps for developing community support for the proposed policy. There should also be a detailed plan for overall implementation of the proposed public policy. Graphs, photos, illustrations, and/or cartoons should be displayed. The students should cite all sources they used.

The following information should be included in the written summary:

- a clear explanation of how the class would seek to gain support from government officials for the proposed public policy
- a clear explanation of how the class would seek to gain support from special interest groups, community groups, businesses, or influential individuals for the proposed public policy and action plan
- identification of influential individuals, businesses, special interest groups, or government agencies that might speak out against the proposed public policy and action plan with their reasons for doing so
- an explanation of the steps to be taken to implement the action plan and the benefits of the plan
- estimated costs and a timeline for implementation of the action plan, if possible

Documentation binder

In the fourth section of the documentation binder, the students must document their research including a selection of the best supporting material. In addition to a table of contents, this section should include evidence that supports the group's work.

Examples might include the following items:

- written statements of support or opposition
- publicity material
- letters from influential individuals or public officials
- other relevant supporting articles, reports, etc.

REFLECTIONS

This component is included in the documentation binder only. The final step of the Project Citizen curriculum asks students to reflect on their learning experience. The fifth section of the documentation binder should contain brief statements and/or letters from students describing what they learned from Project Citizen. This should include reflection on what they learned about public policy and the policymaking process. It should explain how Project Citizen helped them to better understand the role of government officials and citizens. Finally, the reflection should address how they would approach the project differently if they did it again.

If the students have had an opportunity to present their portfolio to an audience in a simulated public hearing, they should include this experience in the reflection.

A Project Citizen portfolio consists of two components: a four-panel display and a five-section documentation binder. When evaluating the portfolio, the criteria on the next page should be applied to both the display and the corresponding section in the documentation binder. Use the rating scale below to evaluate the portfolio. Give only one whole numeric rating (1–10) for each of the five sections of the Criteria for Evaluation.

Level of Achievement	Average Rating
Excellent	9 – 10
Above Average	7 – 8
Average	5 – 6
Below Average	3 – 4
Insufficient	1 – 2

EVALUATOR			
SCHOOL NAME/ TEACHER			
SECTION	CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION	RATING	COMMENTS
1	Understanding of the Problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States and explains the problem and its causes and presents evidence that there is a problem Demonstrates an understanding of issue(s) involved in the problem Demonstrates an understanding of existing or proposed public policies Explains disagreements about the problem that may exist in the community Explains why government should be involved in the solution 		
2	Analysis of Alternative Policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents two or three alternative public policies to address the problem Explains advantages and disadvantages of each alternative policy presented Identifies controversies and conflicts that need to be addressed for each alternative 		
3	Public Policy Development and Persuasiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States a public policy that addresses the problem and identifies the government branch or agency responsible for enacting their proposed public policy Supports their proposed public policy with reasoning and evidence Identifies and explains advantages and disadvantages of their proposed public policy Explains and gives supporting information for why their proposed public policy is constitutional 		
4	Implementation of an Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies individuals and groups, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced Identifies government officials, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced Outlines and explains an action process for getting their proposed public policy enacted Proposes action that builds and expands on evidence presented in previous panels 		
OVERALL PORTFOLIO	Extent to Which the Complete Portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presents material in display panels and binder that is mutually supportive Constructs a clear and convincing sequence from one panel/section to the next Uses and documents research from multiple sources and provides appropriate notation for the sources and research evidence used Uses standards of good writing Uses relevant and appropriate graphics and written information Is visually appealing Includes evidence, only in Section 5 of the documentation binder, of student reflection that states what students have learned 		
TOTAL POINTS AWARDED			