A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS

AUTHENTIC STUDENT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

SCAFFOLDED LEARNING APPROACH

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A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS
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Overview

Introduction

Community Action Projects is an inquiry-based student action program adapted by the Civics Learning Project from Project Citizen, which was developed by the Center for Civic Education over 30 years ago. Every year thousands of students around the country research and collaborate together to develop new policies around issues that are important to them in their communities. Community Action Projects (CAPs) inspire civic engagement and foster a sense of empowerment and belonging. It is flexible in terms of content and grade level, providing meaningful application of skills for all types of learners. Civics Education Research Lab's 2024 study showed doing Community Action Projects improved students' civics content knowledge and skills, civic dispositions like election turnout, and STEM research skills! For support on implementing CAPs in your class, contact Civics Learning Project at programs@civicslearning.org.

The Process

1. Students work together to conduct research about important issues in their community
2. They choose one of the problems that they think most needs a solution
3. Students evaluate the current situation through research and interactions with experts and government officials
4. Students identify alternative solutions and weigh advantages and disadvantages of each
5. Students then propose one policy solution and develop an action plan
6. They document their process, research, and analysis in a portfolio
7. Students present their findings and proposals at a simulated hearing to panelists where they are asked questions about their project. These panels can be made up of school staff, community members, stakeholders, or government employees.

Objectives - CAPs ask students to:

- Identify community issues that need government involvement to solve

- Gather and analyze evidence from a variety of sources and points of view

- Distinguish roles of various branches and levels of government

- Develop and evaluate solutions

- Strategize how to bring government attention to an issue and affect action

- Practice collaboration, problem solving, and civic participation

- Present and defend reasoned opinions to community members

Lesson Plan

Time Needed

There are many different ways to fit a Community Action Project into your year. The following are some variations that might work for you:

8 Week "Ideal Setting" Plan:

During school two or more times a week for an hour a day. This can be a combination of teacher-led lessons related to the CAP and student work time.

- Steps 1 & 2:   1-2 days each
- Steps 3 & 4:   2 weeks each
- Steps 5-7:   1 week each
- Step 8:   1 day

8 Week "Homeroom or Club" Plan:

Students meet for 30-45 minutes once or twice a week.

- Steps 1 & 2:   1 meeting each
- Steps 3 & 4:   4 meetings each
- Steps 5-7:   2 meetings each
- Step 8:   1 meeting

For this plan you will need to assign work (research) to the students to do at home. Allow students to work on research and writing during some meeting times. Enlist help from a volunteer, possibly a parent, to help make meeting times more effective.

4 Week "Tight Timeline" Plan:

Students meet every day for 45-60 minute lessons.

- Steps 1-2:   1 day each
- Steps 3-7:   3 weeks total
- Step 8:   1 day

In the "Tight Timeline" plan, you may not be able to contact and get responses back from experts, but you may be able to coordinate some guest speakers.

Regardless of which schedule you pick, plan the hearings early. You may also want to host a school showcase where students can exhibit their work to more than just the panelists. For guidance on how to organize and structure a showcase, contact programs@civicslearning.org.

Materials Needed:
- Tablets or computers with internet access
- Chart Paper
- One Folder or Binder for each group
- Tri-Fold Board (optional)
- Student copies (digital or paper) of the activity sheets provided in this packet:
  - **Is it Public Policy?** - one per student
  - **Identify Problems** - one per group
  - **Fist to Five** - one per group
  - **Research the Problem** - one per student
  - **Interview Guidelines** - one per student
  - **Interview Report Form** - one per student
  - **Research Notes** - one per student
  - **Analyze Solutions** - one per group
  - **Is it Constitutional?** - one per group
  - **Choose a Policy Solution** - one per group
  - **Our Solution Graphic Organizer** - one per group
  - **Action Plan Checklist** - one per group
  - **Portfolio Preparation Checklist** one per group
  - **Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet** - one per group
  - **Presentation Preparation** - one per student
  - **Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet** - one per student and panelist
  - **Project Summary** - one per group
  - **Student Reflection** - one per student

Procedures:
The implementation of CAPs will vary depending on readiness of your students, size of your class, and how much assistance you get from other adults. Project based learning goes much smoother if you can recruit a partner teacher, educational assistant, parent, or community volunteers when students have group work time.

START HERE - What is public policy?

1. Introduce CAPs to students by telling them they are about to embark on a real world mission to improve a situation they care about in their community. Share the graphic on page 14 and review the steps of the project. Clarify that a community action project is not a volunteering or community service. A community action project requires research, creation of a **public policy solution**, assembly of a portfolio, and a presentation to a group of panelists.

2. Tell students that before they pick a topic they must have a clear understanding of what is public policy. Write this definition on the board: ***Public policy refers to the use of laws and regulations adopted by the government to solve problems.***

3. Distribute one copy of the **Is it Public Policy?** handout per student. As a whole class, review the top half and then have students work in pairs to complete the bottom half. Check for understanding by asking:
   What are the differences between public policy and volunteer action solutions?
   What are the pros and cons of public policy and volunteer action solutions?

NOTE: If you are having students keep their activity sheets, have students place them in their Portfolio Folder in a secure location. Alternatively, you may choose to collect and review the activity sheet as a check for understanding or formative assessment and store it yourself until students are ready to compile their portfolios.

Step 1 - Identify Problems

1. As a class, brainstorm problems students see in their community or state. You or a student can record the responses for all to see on either a board or chart paper.
   If your students don't have much to say yet or aren't very aware of issues, here are some ways you can stimulate their thinking:
   - Bring in members of the community to discuss their organizations and issues they address
   - Go on a field trip or virtual field trip of the community to simply observe the environment to identify gaps or problems
   - Have students interview others in the community about what problems they observe
   - Browse the local news for what issues are being discussed

2. Once your students have generated a substantial list (at least 10 problems), have students go up to the board or chart paper and indicate the three topics they most care about by putting a star or tally next to them.

3. Break students into smaller groups and distribute the **Identify Problems** handout.

4. Review the example as a class then direct each small group to use the criteria to select and evaluate three issues of their choice from the whole class brainstorm.
   NOTE: Students may have different ideas and beliefs of the role of the government and when they should get involved in solving an issue. What some people consider responsible oversight others think of as overreach.

5. After each group has finished, have groups compare their findings with another. Have students share what they had in common with the other group.

6. It's now time for students to pick the problem for their CAP. If you are planning for each group to have their own topics, see if each group can narrow their list down to one issue. If you are planning for the entire class to work on the same topic, help them come to a consensus using the **Fist to Five** method. Once a topic has been selected, research can begin!

Step 2 - Research the Problem
True learning happens when students are empowered to explore and solve problems that they care about.

1. Distribute one **Research the Problem** handout per student and review the research and have students fill in the blanks with their groups.

2. Using the **Questions to Explore** portion of that page, have students see what they already know. You may choose to have them save their responses so they can reflect at the end of the project to see how much they have learned.

3. Depending on the research skills your students possess, you may need to pre-teach, model, and support students in:
   a. Forming or narrowing a research question
   b. Listing keywords that will help an internet search
   c. How to use a search engine effectively
   d. Finding local news sources

    e. Evaluating the quality of a source

    f. How to take effective research notes

    g. Where to learn about government agencies and non-governmental organizations involved

The Oregon School Library and Information System has an online guide for research projects here: https://elementary.oslis.org/learn-to-research

4. Distribute copies of the **Interview Guidelines, Interview Report Form** and **Research Notes** to each student and review as a class. Instruct students to use one form per source to record relevant information they will need when building their portfolios. If a source does not contain useful information, no form is needed. If you are using paper, have a stack of each form available in the classroom throughout the research portion of the project.

NOTE: Interviews can be intimidating. We recommend modeling a polite and productive interview for the class. Recruit a student to play the interviewee and you 'call them' using a script such as:

> *"Good afternoon, is this Commissioner Chavez?"*
> *"Why yes. How can I help you?"*
> *"My name is Franky Jones and I'm a student at Douglas Fir Middle School researching the need for a new landfill in our county. Would you be willing to answer a few questions to help my research?*
> *"Sure thing. I'm about to head into a meeting. Could we talk at another time?"*
> *"Absolutely! I'm even willing to come to your office after school on Wednesdays."*
> *"Great. I'll have my assistant arrange this. Expect a message from Janey. Please make sure to bring an adult with you when you come."*
> *"Wonderful. And I appreciate this so much, Commissioner."*

Afterward, model and brainstorm with students how to come up with questions for an interview. Remind them to end every interview by thanking the person for their time and asking if they have any recommendations on whom else to speak with.

Step 3 - *Analyze Solutions*

1. Assist your students by suggesting where they can find current solutions being proposed by your city, county, or region. Governments have websites with adopted goals, news of recent developments, and other information on what they are working on. If your group is studying a statewide issue, perhaps the Oregon legislature is working on it or recently passed a new law. Their bills can be found here: https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws
There may also be existing policy students can learn about from interviews with engaged government officials and organizations, or by reading the local paper.
NOTE: Sometimes, students are innovating a solution where none exists, but this 'problem' has occurred somewhere else before. They could identify how other places might have dealt with the same issue.

2. Once students have identified at least two existing solution proposals, suggest that they add one of their own creation. This could be a combination of the best parts of other proposals or simply improved implementation of existing policies. But, if all great ideas have already been proposed, they can analyze three existing plans instead of adding their own.

3. Distribute one copy per group of the **Analyze Solutions** handout to help them record the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Remind them to consider the fiscal implications of solutions as well as identifying who will be supporters and opponents of each policy proposal.
NOTE: Provide time for students to share their solutions with other groups. Explaining what they are doing to others will help them understand their own work even better, and may illuminate parts that need more attention.

4. Once students complete the Analyze Solutions handout, it is time for them to determine if their policies are constitutional. Tell students that there is an entire branch of government devoted to interpreting law and ruling on the constitutionality of policies. This is a good time to show the students that there is a state constitution as well as a federal one!

Here are both:

Oregon's Constitution:
https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/Pages/OrConst.aspx
US Constitution:
https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution

Note: If your students are unfamiliar with the concept of a constitution, teach that first. Here's an overview for upper elementary - middle students: https://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4-html/#google_vignette

5. Distribute one **Is it Constitutional?** activity sheet per group for students to evaluate the constitutionality of their policy solutions. Once students have fully analyzed the three policy solutions, it's time for the group to come to consensus on what policy to move forward with.

Step 4 - Choose a Policy Solution

1. Distribute one copy of **Choose a Policy Solution** handout to each group. Some student groups may find they easily come to a full consensus on what solution makes the most sense. Other groups, however, may need to deliberate and debate for a while before agreeing on one solution. Refer to the **Fist to Five** method, if students are having trouble deciding.

2. Once decided, distribute the **Our Solution Graphic Organizer** to each group to complete. Meet with each group to review before giving them the green light to develop an action plan.

Step 5 - Develop an Action Plan

1. Distribute one copy of the **Action Plan Checklist** to each group and review the process with the whole class. Show examples of persuasive Op-Eds from the newspaper, newsletters from interest groups, or video clips of public testimony.

2. Allow the groups work time to brainstorm how to get their message out, to whom they need to get information to, and which agencies hold hearings to take public testimony.

3. During this phase of the CAPs, take time to teach components of writing and delivering a persuasive speech. This will come in handy for their panel presentation later, but also for thinking through the language to use in their Action Plan.

Step 6 - *Assemble the Portfolio*

The inquiry part of the project is done. It's now time to organize all the artifacts into a portfolio. Decide if you want students to use a binder or a digital platform. Either way, show and go through a finished portfolio with them as a model. There are usually some examples posted here: https://civiced.org/project-citizen/portfolios

1. Distribute one copy per group the **Portfolio Preparation Checklist** and the **Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet** to guide the assembly of their work. You may have to pre teach tech skills if you are using a digital portfolio.
   NOTE: You may want to recruit your media specialist to assist students creating a digital portfolio. If you chose the paper portfolio, you will need to provide students with binders, tabs for sections, and a way to print.
2. Allow group work time and monitor students so all members are contributing effort.
3. Once groups think they are finished, have them peer edit each other's portfolios using a copy of the Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet. Tell students this is not an evaluation of the work quality, but is an opportunity to help their peers identify missing or incomplete parts.

Step 7 - *Present at the Hearing*

1. Set a date for your hearings and arrange for school or community members to act as panelists. If you plan on holding the hearing in a different room, don't forget to reserve it! Hand or email panelists the **Overview** page (from the beginning of this packet) when you invite them, so they know what to expect. You may also decide to provide the evaluation sheets ahead of time and coach them on providing constructive feedback.
2. In class, distribute and review one **Presentation Preparation** handout as well as one **Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet** per student. Review with the class. Stress the importance of all group members contributing to the presentation and being present on the hearing date.
3. Hand each group a **Project Summary** sheet to fill out. This should help them distill the whole CAP into the most important parts to convey in

the presentation. We recommend students hand a copy of the Project Summary sheet to each panelist at the start of the hearing.

4. Revisit the elements of persuasive speaking from the lessons you did during the Action Plan stage.

5. Coach students on public speaking essentials like eye contact, volume, pace, enunciation, and pronunciation. Though they may refer to their slides or text during the hearings, they should not be reading to the panel. Knowing their material will help them speak more naturally and be able to respond to questions.

6. Plan at least one dress rehearsal for each group where you can give them tips on what additional information to provide or how to summarize parts that are too long. Allow classmates to ask questions to help them prepare responses.

7. On the day of the hearings, have a trusted student escort panelists to the hearing room. Provide copies of the evaluation sheets to the panelists and remind them of time limits, the order of go, and what to be listening for.

8. After the hearings, if there are particular middle or high school projects that were stellar, consider submitting them to our state showcase! The best projects from Oregon will then be eligible for national consideration and may win recognition! You can find more information about the state showcase on our website, www.civicslearning.org.

Step 8 - *Reflect*

1. The process of doing CAPs is even more important than the final product. Distribute one copy of the **Student Reflection** handout to each student. Give every student quiet time to individually reflect on their experiences in this process. We do this work for the lasting impact it could have on student participation in shaping society and engaging in community.

Assessment

●   Each of the student activity sheets serves as a formative assessment while portfolios and hearing presentations are summative assessments. It is up to the individual teacher to decide what to include for grading purposes versus what to review for feedback only.

- You may choose to use the Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet to do an internal evaluation yourself rather than having the panelists score the Portfolio and/or the hearing. If you have a partner teacher implementing CAPs in their class, you may want to trade portfolios and grade their students' work.
- For the hearings, you may have the opportunity to watch them all and score them yourself. Otherwise, you can decide how to use the panelist scores in the assessment formula.
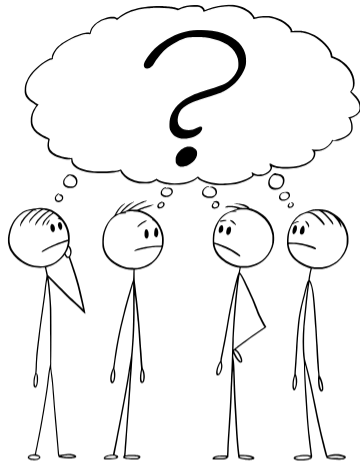
Help

More resources, activities, and teacher supports can be found at the Center for Civic Education's Project Citizen website:
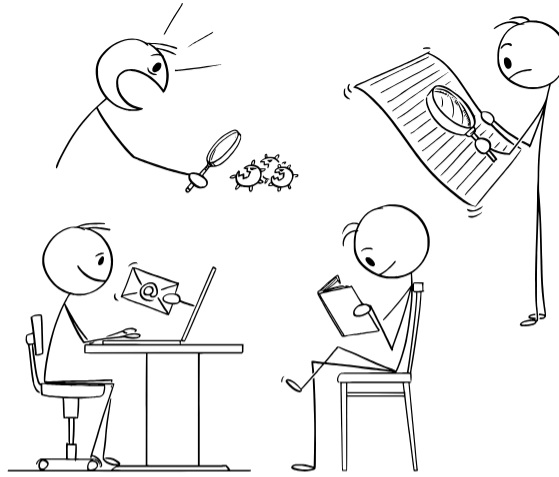- Resources: https://civiced.org/pc2/resources#type
- Webinars for teachers: https://civiced.org/project-citizen-curriculum-in-focus
- Resources in Spanish in the Level 1, 3rd edition materials: https://civiced.org/project-citizen/resources
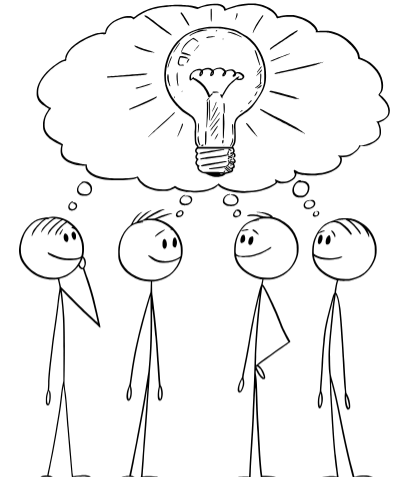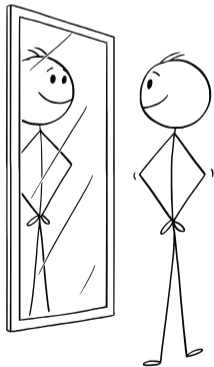
1. Identify Issues   2. Research the Problem   3. Analyze Solutions   4. Choose a Policy
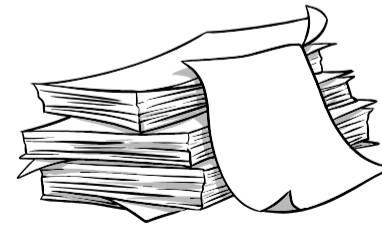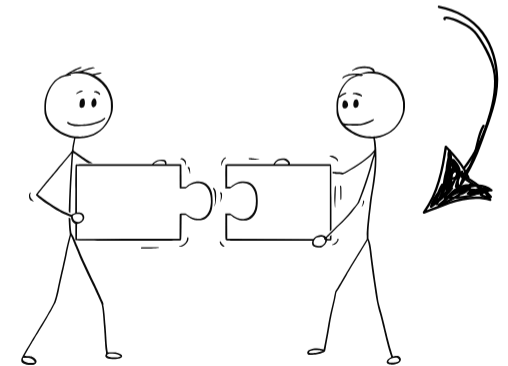
8. Reflect   7. Present   6. Compile Portfolio   5. Develop Action Plan

Tips for Teachers

1. **Make it student-centered:** Having students choose and investigate a problem they want to address ensures they will be more invested in the project. Your job is to facilitate, be a sounding board, and provide guidance and suggestions as needed.

2. **Assist in source evaluation:** Model media literacy skills like lateral reading and source analysis, so students can focus on quality information and not be relying on poor but persuasive content. You may choose to curate some sources for them to get started with some context and basic facts. CLP likes News Literacy Project's materials like this infographic called Is it Legit?

3. **Advise:** Meet with each group often. You will likely need to coach them on narrowing their question or asking more specific research questions, assisting them identify agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in the issue. Also, students usually need someone to ask: *Who is going to pay for that? Who would be doing the work? What makes this the best course of action?*

4. **Recruit:** Extra adults in the room can be helpful. If you can find some parents or volunteers from the community who are either experienced working with teens or experienced in the topic, it will help you keep all the student groups working effectively. Student teachers, educational assistants, and even admin can help. Also, library media specialists are excellent guests to invite in for the research portion. Speech and debate, drama, or mock trial coaches could be helpful in getting kids ready to present.

5. **Check for Understanding:** Frequently assess where each student and group is at. Decide which parts of the project you will be giving feedback on and what you expect from each student, then let them know. You can also decide which parts to put in the gradebook and which are just part of the preparation. Prepare for absences and intervene when work imbalance happens in the student groups.

6. **Teach:** In between student work times, you can teach content and skills they will need for the project itself. For example, you can display some data and model how you wonder aloud about sample size, survey questions used, and location of data collection. You could model integrating quotes from expert sources into a summary paragraph. Perhaps students also need to learn how to brainstorm keywords to use when using a search engine and how to sort findings.

7. **Make contact early.** Start contacting community members, local civic leaders, experts, etc., as early as possible in the process. Correspondence with public officials can take some time. Be sure to help students brainstorm their contact list early enough that students will have time to include the interviews or email responses in their portfolio. Experts can also steer them toward excellent data and existing policy as well as other agencies and groups involved.

8. **Portfolio.** Every CAPs needs a portfolio. Portfolios can be in a binder or digital. Teach students to carefully evaluate, summarize, and select sources for their portfolio. Evidence should be authentic, from your community, and associated with the problem. Surveys, interviews, and local media can be included. As students complete the activity sheets of this project, make sure their work is stored securely until time to compile portfolios. You may be collecting each piece as you go, or having them keep it all until the end, when they submit the final portfolio.

9. **Practice, practice, practice.** Once they have made a portfolio, students can put the most important aspects of their portfolio into presentation slides or poster boards to use as visuals. This will help the audience understand their project better and will keep the presentation flowing when students get nervous. Have students practice their presentation as often as possible with each practice audience asking follow-up questions. Not only will this help students identify parts of the presentation that need fleshing out, they will become more comfortable and knowledgeable about what they are trying to convey.

✓ **CAPs meet state standards for civics, social studies analysis, language arts skills, and other standards specific to the topic students may choose for their policy.**

2024 Social Studies - Upper Elementary - 8th Grade
Essential Disciplinary Practices
I. Develop questions for social science inquiry.

VI. Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues.

X. Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action.

Civics
4.C.PI.1 Investigate the creation of the Oregon constitution and identify its key components.

4.C.IR.3 Examine how identity shapes perspectives about a local or state issue.

4.C.CE.5 Describe the importance of civic participation, including the ballot initiative process, in changing Oregon's laws and Constitution.

5.C.PI.3 Analyze how cooperation and conflict among people contribute to political, economic, religious, and current social events and situations in the United States.

5.C.DP.5 Analyze the Preamble and sections of the Constitution to understand the establishment and limitations of democratic principles.

8.C.PI.8 Examine the interconnection of governing power and responsibility in the system of checks and balances.

8.C.IR.9 Identify and understand how to apply the rights and responsibilities of individuals under the Constitution.

2019 Language Arts
Reading
4.RI.9 Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

5.RI.9 Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

6.RI.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another.*

7.RI.9 Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

8.RI.6 Determine an author's perspective, and/or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to any conflicting evidence or viewpoints.*

Writing

4.W.2/5.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting, illustrations, and multimedia when useful in aiding comprehension.* Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

4.W.5. With guidance and support from peers, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

4.W.7./5.W.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

4.W.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

4.W.9./5.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

5.W.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

6.W.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

7.W.2e Establish and maintain an appropriate style for content, purpose, and audience.*

8.W.1b Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

8.W.1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Speaking and Listening

4.SL.4./5.SL.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

5.SL.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.*

6.SL.1c Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

7.SL.4 Present claims and/or findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.*

8.SL.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

2024 Social Studies - High School
Essential Disciplinary Practices
I. Develop questions for social science inquiry.

III. Collect, interpret, evaluate, and apply information from primary and secondary sources to better understand and create historical narrative distinguishing between fact and opinion.

IV. Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events.

VI. Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues.

IX. Develop the necessary skills to critically analyze and evaluate digital and social media content, identify reliable sources, and become more informed and responsible digital citizens.

X. Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action.

Civics
HS.C.PI.3 Examine and compare institutions, functions, and processes of government.

HS.C.DP.13 Argue and defend positions on contemporary issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension.

HS.C.CE.17 Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally.

HS.C.CE.19 Compare the debate over a public policy issue from the past with a contemporary issue and evaluate the role of political parties, interest groups, social movements, and media in influencing public opinion.

2019 Language Arts - High School
Reading
9-10.RI.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

11-12.RI.8 Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in works of public advocacy, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning and the premises, purposes, and arguments.*

Writing

9-10.W.2a Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting, graphics, and multimedia when useful in aiding comprehension.*

9-10.W.2b Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.*

9-10.W.2c Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

9-10.W.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

9-10.W.2e Establish a style and tone relevant to the discipline in which they are writing.*

9-10.W.2f Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.*

9-10.W.7 Conduct short as well as more comprehensive research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

11-12.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

11-12.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Speaking and Listening

9-10.SL.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

9-10.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically, so listeners can follow the line of reasoning; ensure that the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.*

11-12.SL.1b Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

11-12.SL.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.*

Student Activity Sheets

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS
Is it Public Policy?

Name: _____

Public policy refers to the use of laws and regulations adopted by the government to solve problems.

Volunteer action refers to work done by community members who choose to be there and are not paid.

Example:

Community Problem: There is litter in the neighborhood park.

Public Policy Solution: Since littering is already illegal, the City Council votes to increase the amount of the fine to $100 per piece of trash left and directs the police to issue tickets.

Volunteer Action: Stevie and his friends decide to pick up trash every time they go to the park to play basketball.

For each of the following, determine and circle if it is a public policy or volunteer action:

Community Problem and Response	Circle the Response Type
Many Oregon families don't have enough money for groceries. So, members of a local church host a town-wide canned food drive and deliver to families in need.	Public policy solution or Volunteer Action
Some students who stay after school for sports or activities don't have transportation home. The School Board votes to direct the school district to hire more bus drivers and provide an activity bus.	Public policy solution or Volunteer Action
Elderly folks who fall at home sometimes can't get up and call 9-1-1 for help. The County Health Department asks the Governor or Oregon to direct the Health and Human Services Department to fund and hire a Fall Prevention and Assistance task force.	Public policy solution or Volunteer Action
Old fishing line on river banks is killing birds and other wildlife who get caught in it. A group of fishermen who call themselves 'river stewards' decide to do a once-a-month clean up day of the river banks at popular fishing spots in their area.	Public policy solution or Volunteer Action

Check for Understanding:

1. *What are two public policies that affect you? What are two volunteer actions that people in your community can be a part of?*

2. *What are the pros and cons of public policy and volunteer action solutions?*

Identify Problems

Names:_____

Directions: Select three issues from the class list and write them each in one issue box below. Then use the checklist to decide if it would be a good topic for a CAP. To be a good community problem, it must meet **all three** requirements on the list.

Example:

Issue: *People waste too much money on fancy coffee drinks.*		
Criteria for a 'good problem:'	**Yes**	**No**
Does any part of the government have a responsibility to deal with it?		X
Is the problem important to the community and our class?	X	
Is it a problem that we might be able to solve?		X

A good topic for CAPs requires a "yes" for all three criteria.

Note: It's ok to start with a topic and realize it won't work for CAPs. Not every problem can or should be solved with public policy and some 'solutions' could violate people's constitutional rights. However, helping others by volunteering is often not enough for issues that need a strong plan and action from the government. Finding the right issue to focus on is one of the most important steps in your CAPs process.

Issue 1:		
Criteria for a 'good problem:'	**Yes**	**No**
Does any part of the government have a responsibility to deal with it?		
Is the problem important to the community and our class?		
Is it a problem that we might be able to solve?		

Identify Problems

Issue 2:		
Criteria for a 'good problem:'	**Yes**	**No**
Does any part of the government have a responsibility to deal with it?		
Is the problem important to the community and our class?		
Is it a problem that we might be able to solve?		

Issue 3:		
Criteria for a 'good problem:'	**Yes**	**No**
Does any part of the government have a responsibility to deal with it?		
Is the problem important to the community and our class?		
Is it a problem that we might be able to solve?		

Did people in your group disagree on whether or not the government should get involved in the solution? Explain.

Will any of these work for a Community Action Project? If yes, which issue would you like to see your group or the class create a public policy solution for? Explain.

BUILDING CONSENSUS

FIST TO FIVE

I will block this from moving forward

I disagree strongly

I can live with it

I agree, with reservations

I agree

I endorse this enthusiastically

Research The Problem

Names: _____

Research Guide

The Oregon School Library and Information System has an online guide for research projects here: https://elementary.oslis.org/learn-to-research

Steps of Research

Your group will:

1. Identify a CAPs problem
   Our CAPs topic is: _____

2. Narrow the scope of what your group will research. For example, if your group is wanting to address houselessness, you may want to narrow that to research affordable housing or mental health resources.
   Our group will specifically look at _____

3. Identify 3 - 5 key words to use in your research
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

4. Develop a list of five possible sources (text, video, people, etc) where you can find or interview for information
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -

5. Use the Questions to Explore section on the back of this page to begin your research

6. Write down important information on the Interview Report Form or Research Notes Form

7. Review the information you've gathered and determine additional research that needs to be done, if any

Questions to Explore:

WHAT? What is going wrong? How serious is it for the community? How concerned are people about the problem?

WHERE? How far has this problem spread? Which areas need the most help? Is it growing or shrinking?

WHEN? Is this new or has it been ongoing? When did it start or start to get worse? What is expected to happen in the future if nothing is done?

WHY? What are the main reasons this problem is happening? Why hasn't it been solved?

WHO? Who does this issue most affect? How many people are affected by it? In what ways are they affected? Who are the people working to solve this problem? Are there any folks who think this isn't a problem?

HOW? Which level of government (federal, state, local) is best suited to solve it? Which agencies should be involved? Which non-governmental organizations should be involved or are already? Are there disagreements about the way this problem is being handled? Is there a law or policy that already exists for this issue? If so, why isn't it enough to solve the problem?

Interview Guidelines

Interview Procedures

- Once you have found possible sources, call them and ask if you can setup an interview.
  "Hello. My name is _____. I am a student at _____ working on a policy project for _____. We are studying local problems, possible policy solutions, and how people can participate in their community. I am interested in learning more about _____. Would you be willing to be interviewed?

- Once you have an interview scheduled, make a list of questions for that person. You can use the sample questions below for inspiration.

- Before you start the interview, introduce yourself and explain the problem you are researching.
  "Thank you so much for meeting with me. Again, my name is _____ and I am studying _____ for my class at _____. I have a few questions for you."

- Ask your questions.

- Listen carefully during the interview and record your notes on the Interview Report Form. If you take notes while the interview is happening, remember not to write the whole time. It's important to look at the person you are talking to. You can take short pauses to write down important things and then return to the conversation. If you want, you can also ask if you can record the conversation.

- End the interview by thanking the person for their time and asking if they have any recommendations on who else to speak with or where to find additional information.

Sample interview questions:

What is your understanding and view on the issue?
What might be the cause or causes of this problem?
What disagreements about this issue, if any, exist in our community?
What responsibility do you think individuals have in dealing with this problem?
Do you think this is a problem that should be dealt with by the Government?
Which part of the Government, such as a branch or agency, do you think should be responsible for this?
Do you know of a rule or policy that already addresses this problem?
Which parts of the policy do you like and not like? Why?
How could the policy be made better?
What kind of policy do you think should be created to help with the problem?

Other questions you're group would like to ask in an interview:

Interview Report Form

Use one form per interview.

Name(s) _____

Date and location of interview:

Name and role:

What is this person's connection with the issue?

What is the person's knowledge of, experience with, and thoughts on the issue?

What are three to five key takeaways you or your group has from the interview?

Recommendations for who else to speak with or where to find more information:

Research Notes

Use one form for each quality source.

Name(s): _____

Source Information:

Author(s):	Title:
Publisher:	Volume/chapter/page:
Date published:	Date accessed:

Notes on what we learned from this source that helps us answer our research question:

Analyze Solutions

When searching for policy solutions, you might look for:
- *Ideas suggested by different political parties or groups that care about certain issues.*
- *Bills proposed by elected officials*
- *Policy ideas shared in speeches or editorials by elected officials or community members*
- *Current policies in other towns, cities, states, or countries*
- *Ideas created by you and your team during brainstorming sessions*

From all the solutions you find, <u>pick the three your group likes best and analyze them below</u>:

Alternative #1

Policy Name/Title:	Describe the solution in one paragraph:
List up to 5 advantages of this solution:	List up to 3 disadvantages of this solution:
What people or organizations support this policy?	What people or organizations oppose this policy?

Alternative #2

Policy Name/Title:	Describe the solution in one paragraph:
List up to 5 advantages of this solution:	List up to 3 disadvantages of this solution:
What people or organizations support this policy?	What people or organizations oppose this policy?

Alternative #3

Policy Name/Title:	Describe the solution in one paragraph:
List up to 5 advantages of this solution:	List up to 3 disadvantages of this solution:
What people or organizations support this policy?	What people or organizations oppose this policy?

Is it Constitutional?

Name(s): _____

Who decides if a policy is constitutional?

State and Federal Constitutions are written in a way that individual people interpret their meaning differently. As a result, there can be disagreement on whether a policy solution is constitutional. Therefore, judges who serve in the Judicial System decide if laws and policies are consistent with the state and Federal Constitutions.

Goals of the Constitution of 1787

A **preamble** is an introduction that states the goals of a document. Below is the original text and an adapted version of the Preamble to the United States Constitution.

Original Text

> *We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

Adapted Text

> The people of the United States of America are making this o!cial Constitution in order to form a united and just country that is peaceful, can protect its citizens in case of danger, guarantees that its citizens enjoy essential freedoms, and promotes the well being of everyone who lives there.

1. *What do you think the Preamble is trying to tell us? Discuss it as a class or in your group.*
2. *Now, what are the general goals of the 1787 Constitution according to its preamble? List them here:*
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -
   -
3. *Which of these goals best relates to the problem you are focusing on with your CAP? Explain.*

Bill of Rights

After the Constitution was approved, the first Congress suggested some changes called **amendments.** These changes were meant to explain what the government could not do and what rights people and states had. The first ten amendments are very important because they set limits on government power.

Amendment 1: Allows people to practice any religion or no religion at all, speak their ideas and opinions, and protest in public. It also gives the media the freedom to publish what they want.

Amendment 2: Congress can't stop people from having or carrying weapons.

Amendment 3: You don't have to let soldiers live in your house, except if there is a way, and even then Congress needs to pass a law and set the rules.

Amendment 4: Nobody can search your body, your house, or your things, unless they can prove to a judge that they have good reason for the search.

Amendment 5: A person cannot be forced to testify against themselves in a criminal trial. A person cannot be tried more than once for the same crime. The government can't take a person's house or property unless it pays a fair price for it.

Amendment 6: Any person accused of a crime has the right to a speedy public trial decided by a jury of ordinary people and the right to a lawyer to help them.

Amendment 7: A person has the right to a jury when it is a civil case (a case solving a dispute between two parties)

Amendment 8: The government can't inflict torture people even if they are convicted for a crime.

Amendment 9: Just because a right is not listed in the Bill of Rights, doesn't mean people don't have other rights too.

Amendment 10: Rights not assigned or decided by the federal government are up to the states or the people to decide.

> 4. *Do any of the solutions to your project problem violate these individual rights? Explain.*

Just Compensation

If the government needs to take someone's private property for the benefit of the group, the 5th amendment requires 'just compensation.' In other words, you have to pay them a fair price.

Example: The city needs to build a bridge for the railroad so traffic doesn't keep getting backed up whenever the train comes through. You live right next to the site where the bridge will be built. Your big yard is about to become a smaller yard, so you will be paid for your loss.

> 5. *Do any of the CAPs solutions require the government to use or take someone's private property? Explain.*

State Laws

The Tenth Amendment says that even though the national government is supreme, states can make their own laws too, as long as they are not against US laws. Each state even has its own constitution.
Example: In Oregon, the public has access to the entire coastline from the water to the vegetation line. This is not the case in all states.

> 6. *Are you aware of any Oregon state law that your proposed solutions would violate?*

Equal Protection Clause

When the law is not applied equally, it creates unfair situations. One of the most important additions to the Constitution, the 14th amendment, gave "the equal protection of the laws" to " to any person within [any State's] jurisdiction."

> 7. *Would any of the policy options in your CAP treat any particular groups of people unfairly? Explain.*

Choose a Policy Solution

Directions: It's time to agree on what direction your policy project will take. When deciding which solution to choose, you can:
- Support one of the alternative policies you studied
- Change one of those policies to improve it
- Combine parts of different alternatives, or
- Create a completely new public policy solution

Steps:
1. First, check if the alternative solutions follow the Constitution. Do any parts break the individual rights and freedoms that the Constitution protects? Does the government have the resources to enforce this policy?

2. Next, have each member of your group share which policy or parts of policies they like and explain why. Then, work together as a group to agree on which policy you want to move forward with and present.

3. Discussing helps your group agree on a policy solution for the problem. Building consensus means picking something that everyone in the group can accept. This is different from majority voting where the opinions of a few people might not be considered.

4. Finally, complete the chosen policy solution using the **Our Solution Graphic Organizer**.

Our Solution Graphic Organizer

Names:

Summarize your policy solution in 5 sentences or less:	
Title/Name of your policy:	**List of sources where you got the ideas for this policy:**
Circle the level of government responsible for overseeing your policy? Local / State / Federal List at least one government agency responsible for implementing or enforcing your policy solution:	
What are the advantages of this policy? (3 or more)	**What are some disadvantages?**
Why are you confident this policy is a good solution to our problem?	

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS
Action Plan Checklist

Think about how your group can make your idea happen. Talk about these questions:
- How will you get the appropriate government employee or agency to read or listen to and agree with your plan?
- Will there be a meeting and a vote needed by any agency, or is it already part of their job?
- How will this project be paid for or funded?
  - Are there already groups that do this kind of work with money set aside for it, or will new funds need to be found?
- Will you have a campaign to teach the public about your project?
- How will you persuade people who are likely to support your idea?
- How will you change the minds of those who don't agree with you?

Example:
Neighborhood Bee Hive Project Action Plan Calendar

May 1st - Gather interested parties to form an action team at a kick-off party at Hollinshead Park. Pick team leaders for subcommittees:
- Government relations team: This team will work on building good connections with the government and helping our organization communicate with them.
- Media team: The media team will share our news and events. They will use newspapers, TV, and the internet to let people know what we are doing.
- Canvassing team: This team will go out into the community to talk to people. They will ask questions and gather opinions about important topics.
- Treasurer: The treasurer will be in charge of managing our money. They will keep track of our funds and make sure we spend wisely.

May 10 - Subcommittees meet to schedule work

June 1 - Media team sends out press release to local media and does follow up interviews

June 3 - Canvassing team starts taking Bee Nice flyers door to door

June 7 - Media team meets with local agricultural co-op and tables at farmers' market

June 15 - All member check in meeting with status reports

July 1 - Media team has booth at farmers' market

July 15 - All neighborhoods canvas deadline

August 1 - Gov. Relations team testifies at City Council hearing on neighborhood associations and makes policy pitch. Treasurer gives a report of donations gathered to launch the first hive in Orchard District. Request for City to match donations to establish the next hive.

Write down the steps of your plan and put them on a calendar.

Portfolio Preparation Checklist

A portfolio captures all the work your group did. It is a way to show and explain the policy solution you worked so hard to develop. The portfolio sections should be in the following order:

Introduction:

- ☐ Cover Page with names of students, teacher, and school
- ☐ Table of Contents with page numbers

The Problem:

- ☐ Summary of problem and explanation of existing policies and why they have failed
- ☐ Graphics that support summary
- ☐ Problem identification form
- ☐ Include Evidence:
    - ☐ Interview report forms
    - ☐ Research notes
    - ☐ Printed sources that were useful
- ☐ Sources cited list

Alternative Policy Options:

- ☐ Summary of alternative policy solutions (with advantages & disadvantages)
- ☐ Graphics that support the text
- ☐ Analyzing Solutions form
- ☐ Sources cited list

Our Policy Solution:

- ☐ Explanation of your chosen policy
- ☐ Budget estimates - identify both costs and sources of funding
- ☐ Advantages and disadvantages
- ☐ Level of government responsible (action and money)
- ☐ Our Solution Graphic Organizer
- ☐ Is it Constitutional? Form
- ☐ Source cited list

Our Action Plan:

- ☐ Plan to achieve our goal and win the support of:
    Individuals impacted or interested
    Groups impacted or interested
    Government necessary for approval, action, and money
- ☐ Graphics and other media we would use to pitch our proposal presentation

Reflection:

- ☐ Student Reflection form for each member of the group
- ☐ Thanks for people who helped

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION RATING SHEET

Excellent: 9–10   Above Average: 7–8   Average: 5–6   Below Average: 3–4   Insufficient: 1–2

Criteria for Evaluation	Rating	Comments
Panel/Section 1: Understanding the Problem ● 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		
Panel/Section 2: Analysis of Alternative Policies ● 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 may need to be addressed for each alternative		
Panel/Section 3: Public Policy Development and Persuasiveness ● 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 supports why their proposed public policy is constitutional		
Panel/Section 4: Implementation of an Action Plan ● 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 does the following: ● Presents material in the display and binder that correlate to and support each other ● 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 ● Follows standards of good writing ● Uses relevant and appropriate graphics and written information ● Is visually appealing ● Includes evidence of student reflection that states what students have learned [this appears in Section 5 of the Documentation Binder only.]		
TOTAL POINTS AWARDED		

Evaluator: **Date:**

Presentation Preparation

You will present your project to a group of panelists to convince them that there is a problem, that you have researched it thoroughly, and that your policy proposal should be put into action. Key points to remember:

Opening Oral Presentation - 4 minutes

The first four minutes will be when your group presents the most significant information from your portfolio. Make sure to include information from each section. All members of your group need to speak. There are four goals of your presentation:

- To inform an audience of the importance of the problem in your community.
- To explain the alternative policies so that an audience can understand the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- To discuss your group's choice as the best policy to deal with the problem and convince the panelists it's the best solution. To explain that the proposed policy does not violate the federal and state Constitutions.
- To show how your class could gain support for its policy in your community, as well as in the legislative and executive branches of the right level of government.

Tip for success: Do not read to the panelists from your portfolio display. Select the most important information and arguments and present them in a conversational style.

Question and Answer Period - 6 minutes

Be prepared for the panelists to ask your group to explain more, give examples, defend some of your points, and share what you learned from your experience.

Checklist for Presentation Visuals:

You may use poster boards or digital slides

- Title of the project, student names, teacher and school
- Titles for each section/panel
- Information included is only the most important from your project
- Government involvement is clear
- Well organized
- Appropriate graphics and pictures
- Attention-getting
- Thanks to community supporters who helped
- Sources cited listed at end of slides or on back of posters

Note: Only materials included in your portfolio may be used during the oral presentation.

A Guide to Community Action Projects
Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet

Excellent: 9–10   **Above Average: 7–8**   **Average: 5–6**   **Below Average: 3–4**   **Insufficient: 1–2**

Criteria for Evaluation	Rating	Comments
Understanding the Problem ● Stated and explained the problem and its causes and presented evidence that there is a problem ● Demonstrated an understanding of issue(s) involved in the problem ● Demonstrated an understanding of existing or proposed public policies ● Explained disagreements about the problem that may exist in the community ● Explained why government should be involved in the solution		
Analysis of Alternative Policies ● Presented two or three alternative policies to address the problem ● Explained advantages and disadvantages of each alternative policy presented ● Identified controversies and conflicts that need to be addressed for each alternative		
Public Policy Development and Persuasiveness ● Stated a public policy that addresses the problem and identified the government branch or agency responsible for enacting their proposed public policy ● Supported their proposed public policy with reasoning and evidence ● Identified advantages and disadvantages of their proposed public policy ● Explained and supported why their proposed public policy is constitutional		
Implementation of an Action Plan ● Identified individuals and groups, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced ● Identified government officials, both supporters and opponents, who will need to be influenced ● Outlined and explained an action process for getting their proposed public policy enacted ● Proposed actions that build and expand on presentations by previous groups		
Overall Hearing: Extent to which the entire presentation has: ● Constructed a clear and convincing sequence from one group to the next ● Used and documented research from multiple sources and made reference to sources and research used ● Referenced relevant and appropriate graphics and written information ● Used standards of good oral presentation (pace, projection, articulation, poise, eye contact) ● Shared speaking responsibility while making the presentation ● Included evidence of reflection that states what the students learned		
TOTAL POINTS AWARDED		

Evaluator: **Date:**

Project Summary

The Problem	Alternative Policy Options	Our Policy	Our Action Plan
The Problem:	Alternative: Alternative:	Our Proposed Policy:	Steps we will follow:
Disagreements in the Community:	Issues with these two rejected alternatives:	Agencies involved:	Most important sources used:

Student Reflection

Student Name: _____

Individually, respond to the following questions to reflect on your experience with the project.

1. Based on your own research and review of the alternative policies, which policy did YOU think would be the best choice for a policy solution and why?

2. What did you think of the process for deciding the chosen policy? Explain.

3. How has your understanding of the issue you picked changed since the beginning of the project?

4. What skills did you develop as you worked on the project?

5. What did you learn about the government and how it works from this project?