

CBA Instructional Module for using Project Citizen and the Constitutional Issues in the Middle School

Unit Goal:

The following example will use the topic of “Censorship of Student Newspapers” as an issue to explore at the middle school level. It will provide sample lessons to use as a model to carry out a project for Project Citizen that will meet the requirements for the state civics CBA.

Unit Goals:

In this unit, students will learn to:

1. Identify a problem in their school or community
2. Examine alternative policies to solve the problem
3. Propose a best policy to solve the problem
4. Design an action plan to implement the proposed policy
5. Present class portfolio
6. Reflect on learning and write a response to meet state CBA rubric that will:
 - a. Explain specific rights guaranteed by the Constitution and how these rights are related to responsibilities. (Civics EALR 1.1.2b)
 - b. Explain how responsibility to the common good might conflict with the exercise of individual rights. (Civics EALR 4.1.2a)
 - c. Explain key democratic ideals of the U.S. government and discuss their application in specific situations. (Civics EALR 1.2.2a)
 - d. Identify multiple perspectives; compare and contrast; use multiple sources; determine relevant information. (Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 3.1.3a)

Time Frame:

Six to Eight weeks

Materials Used:

1. Project Citizen student and teacher text
2. One 2 inch 3-ring binder and a 4 panel graphics display board
3. Multiple outside resources, as part of student research

Lessons for Goal One: Identifying a problem (about one-two weeks)

- A. Define “What is Public Policy”.
Use Project Citizen Text pgs. 7-10 in small groups. Assign homework interviews over the next day or two and report to whole group in class. Use Project Citizen Text pgs. 11-15. During homework interviews and class discussion of public policy issues, the teacher explicitly facilitates how issues relate the rights of the individual to the common good.

LINK 1

- B. Select a problem for the class to study.
Use Project Citizen Text pg. 16. Narrow down topic list over 2-3 days. During open discussion, the teacher facilitates how the issue relates to democratic ideals and/or constitutional principles. The class must vote on what topic to select.

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- C. Gather information on the problem/topic the class has selected. Use Project Citizen Text pgs. 17-23. During this process, the teacher facilitates learning about topic background, policies and multiple stakeholder perspectives.

LINK 3

Lessons for Goals 2-5: Alternatives – written response (about three – five weeks)

- A. Divide the class into four work groups to develop a class portfolio. Use Project Citizen text pgs. 24-32.

Group 1 – Explain the problem.

Group 2 – Examine Alternative Policies for the class to study.

Group 3 – Create a proposed class policy the class votes to adopt.

Group 4 – Design an action plan.

1. During research and discussion for the portfolio, the teacher facilitates the creation of bibliography pages for each group so that explicit references to support the position the class will take on the issue can be identified.
2. During research and discussion, the teacher facilitates an investigation of how the issues of the proposed class policy relate to the Constitution.

LINK 2

3. During research and discussion, the teacher facilitates identification of multiple stakeholders and perspectives.

LINK 3

4. During research and discussion, the teacher facilitates the exploration of at least two or three alternative policies.

LINK 4

5. Through an educated discussion, students will exercise the democratic process of voting for the class proposed policy.
6. The teacher facilitates a plan to include the steps that students might take to get their proposed policy accepted and implemented by the appropriate level of government.

LINK 3

7. Presentation of the Portfolio. Use pgs. 33-34 of Project Citizen Text.

Lessons for Goal 6: Reflection and written CBA response (about one week)

- A. Reflecting on the learning experience. Use pg. 35 in Project Citizen Text.
- B. Written response to meet state CBA rubric.
During the written response, students must use the state rubric for the “Constitutional Issues” CBA, as it relates to the problem they selected, the alternatives they explored, and the action plan they propose. The rubric requires them to:
 - Explain specific rights guaranteed by the Constitution and how these rights are related to responsibilities. (Civics EALR 1.1.2b)
 - Explain how responsibility to the common good might conflict with the exercise of individual rights. (Civics EALR 4.1.2a)
 - Explain key democratic ideals of the U.S. government and discuss their application in specific situation. (Civics EALR 1.2.2a)
 - Identify multiple perspectives; compare and contrast; use multiple sources; determine relevant information. (Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 3.1.3a)

Suggested Websites for student research:

- We The People and Project Citizen: <http://www.civiced.org>
- Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov>
- The U.S. Constitution: the Constitution: http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/constitution.html
- Learn and Serve Washington: <http://www.k12.wa.us/TitleVpartA/Learn/Serve/resources.aspx>
- Washington State Legislature: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/common/kids/default.html>
- YouthCourt: <http://www.youthcourt.net>
- YMCA’s Youth in Government Program: <http://www.youthandgovernment.org/HOME.asp>
- League of Women Voters Guides: <http://www.lwvwa.org/edfund/projects.html>
- Washington’s Secretary of State – Voter Outreach Through Education (VOTE): <http://www.vote.wa.gov/outreach>
- Constitutional Rights Foundation: <http://www.crf-usa.org/>
- National Issues Forum: <http://www.nifi.org>
- Landmark Supreme Court Cases: <http://www.landmarkcases.org>
- OYEZ: <http://www.oyez.org>

Link 1



Rubric: Civics EALR 4.1.2a

Facilitation of Individual Rights & Responsibilities and the Common Good

This CBA topic of “Censorship of Student Newspapers” involves individual rights and the common good in a number of ways:

Individual Rights	Common Good
Reporters have individual rights to print what they want	Reporters have the responsibility to inform the student body
The newspaper editor has the right to make decisions about the paper	What is printed affects the common good of the educational climate
The administration has right to make decisions about the school	The newspaper editor has a responsibility to make sure that stories are fair and accurate for the common good
	The student body might be offended by some student articles
	The administration has the responsibility to make decisions to protect the student body
	The public has the right to know information for their common good

These issues will come up as the class selects and investigates their problem, as they evaluate alternatives to solve their problem, as they design their action plan, and as they write their written responses for the state Civics CBA.

[Link 2](#)



Rubric: Civics EALR 1.2.2a

Rubric: Civics EALR 1.1.2b

The following beliefs and principles can be explored as they relate to any topic choice.

Democratic Ideals include:		Constitutional Principles include	
• Justice	• Diversity	• Rule of Law	• Human Rights
• Equality	• Truth	• Separation of Powers	• Federalism
• Life	• Popular Sovereignty	• Representative Government	First Amendment Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none">• speech, religion, press, assembly, petition
• Pursuit of Happiness	• Patriotism	• Checks and Balances	• due process and freedom from discrimination
• Liberty	• Common Good	• Civil Rights	

Key Concepts and Vocabulary,
Use pgs. 36-37 in Project Citizen Text

In the topic example of “Censorship of Student Newspapers,” issues that relate to the Constitution are as follows:

- Reporters have First Amendment rights of freedom of the press.
- Students have the right to due process when an administrator makes a decision about what they can and can’t print (14th Amendment).

Other Constitutional Principles or Democratic Ideals related to this topic:

- Popular Sovereignty of the editor to govern the newspaper.
- Liberty and Pursuit of happiness to exercise while living our democratic lives.
- The Supreme Court Case of Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1987) found in favor of the administration. The Constitutional principles at work are checks and balances of student body power and administrative power, and common good for “the shared values of a civilized social order”.

Link 3



Rubric: Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 3.1.3a

Identifying multiple stakeholders and perspectives

In this topic example “Censorship of Student Newspapers,” stakeholders and perspectives can be identified as follows:

Stakeholders (people who are affected by the policy)


- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Administration
- Community members
- School Board


Possible Perspectives:


- Students want to print whatever they want.
- Administration must think about the welfare of all students.
- Parents support their kids.
- Community members want to know that their schools are under control.
- School Boards want schools to provide the best education possible within the funding provided.


An action plan must address the needs of the multiple stakeholders, and provide a way to gain support from the public and the appropriate level of government (federal, state, county, municipal (city/local), district school board, school building administration. In the above example, the appropriate level of government is the school building administration; however due process (appeal process) could be sought with the school district or any higher level.

Link 4

 Social Studies Inquiry and Information Skills 3.1.3a

 Civics: EALR 4.1.2a

 Civics: EALR 1.2.2a

 Civics: EALR 1.1.2b

Examples of alternative policies for the topic “Censorship of Student Newspapers” are as follows:

Alternative 1: STUDENT-GENERATED LIST OF GUIDELINES FOR PUBLISHING THEIR OWN PAPER

- Students get to choose their own editor without any adult oversight. This editor would have final say.
- Students get to write whatever they want provided that a student-selected board of students approve of the final selections.


Alternative 2: ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTS THE STUDENT EDITOR WHO IS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

- Administrator makes the decision of who will be the editor.
- Students must clear all articles through the editor who must show the administrator.

Alternative 3: ADMINISTRATOR BECOMES THE NEWSPAPER EDITOR

- Administrator generated list of guidelines for publication.
- Administrator approves all articles.

The above alternative policies are just sketches of ideas that might be considered as proposed policies to address the problem of censorship of student newspapers. The alternatives would be much more developed through research of what other schools have done locally, at the state level, and even at the national level. The policy that the class ends up proposing could be one of the above, some kind of blending of the above ideas, or something completely different. The key is to do thorough research into the advantages and disadvantages of each policy, what would fit best with your school, what would be best supported by all of the stakeholders, and what would balance the rights of the individual with the common good. Additionally, students must investigate to make sure that whatever policy for which they choose to develop an action plan, it does not violate the state or federal constitutions.

All of the above considerations should be addressed throughout the process of doing Project Citizen so that students are consciously aware of what they are learning. When it comes time to do the written response that counts for their Civics CBA  students must reveal the points of all of their learning, according to the CBA rubric.