

# Project Citizen

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*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**

# What is Project Citizen?

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- 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
  - Serves as a model performance assessment

# What are the Goals of Project Citizen?

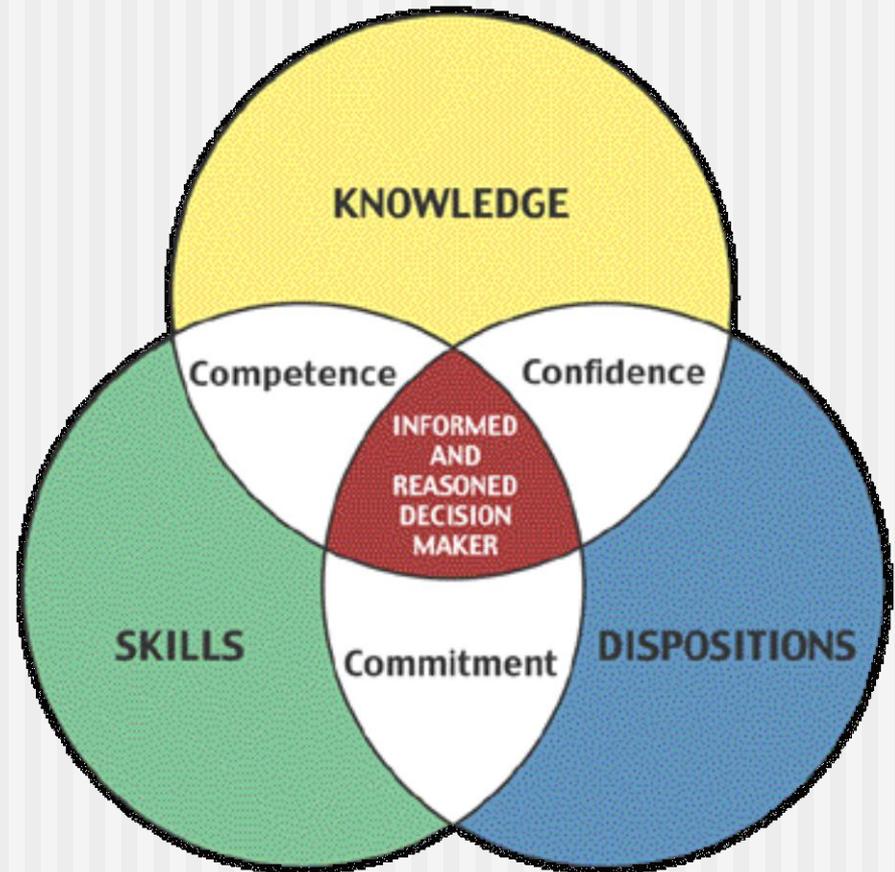
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The primary goal of Project Citizen is to develop in students a commitment to active citizenship and governance by

- providing the knowledge and skills required for effective citizenship
- providing practical experience designed to foster a sense of competence and efficacy
- 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 Does the Project Citizen Instructional Program Achieve?

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- The instructional program help students to
- learn how to monitor and influence public policy
  - learn about policymaking processes
  - develop concrete skills and the foundation needed to become responsible participating citizens
  - develop effective, creative communication skills
  - develop more positive self-images and confidence in exercising their rights and responsibilities

# What is Public Policy?

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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?

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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

# What Criteria is Used to Select a Problem?

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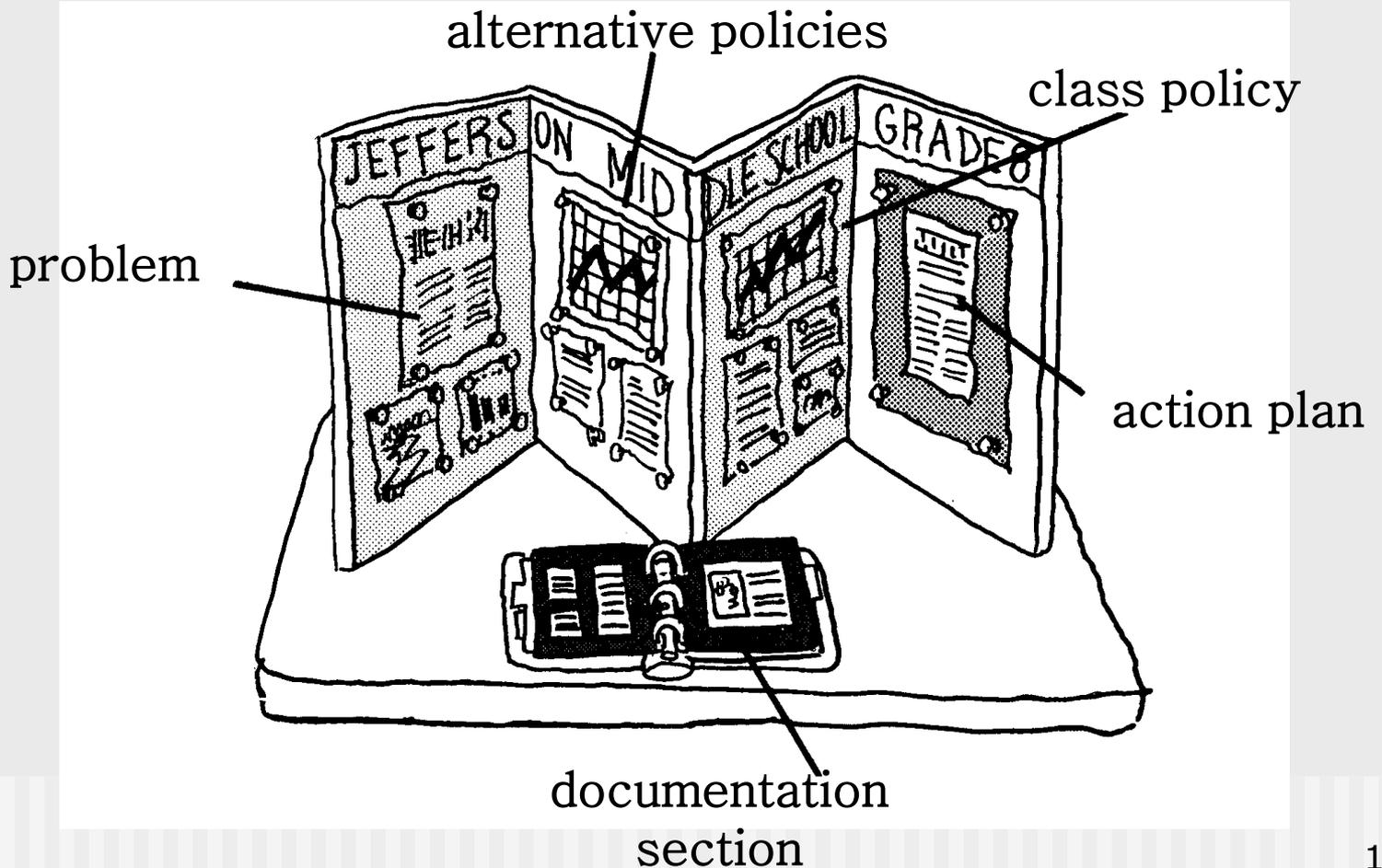
- 1) Is the problem you selected important to you and other people in your community?
- 2) Does government have some responsibility to deal with this problem?
- 3) Will there be sufficient information about the problem to develop a good project?
- 4) Is there a realistic possibility of solving the problem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

# What is the Sequence of Steps in Project Citizen?

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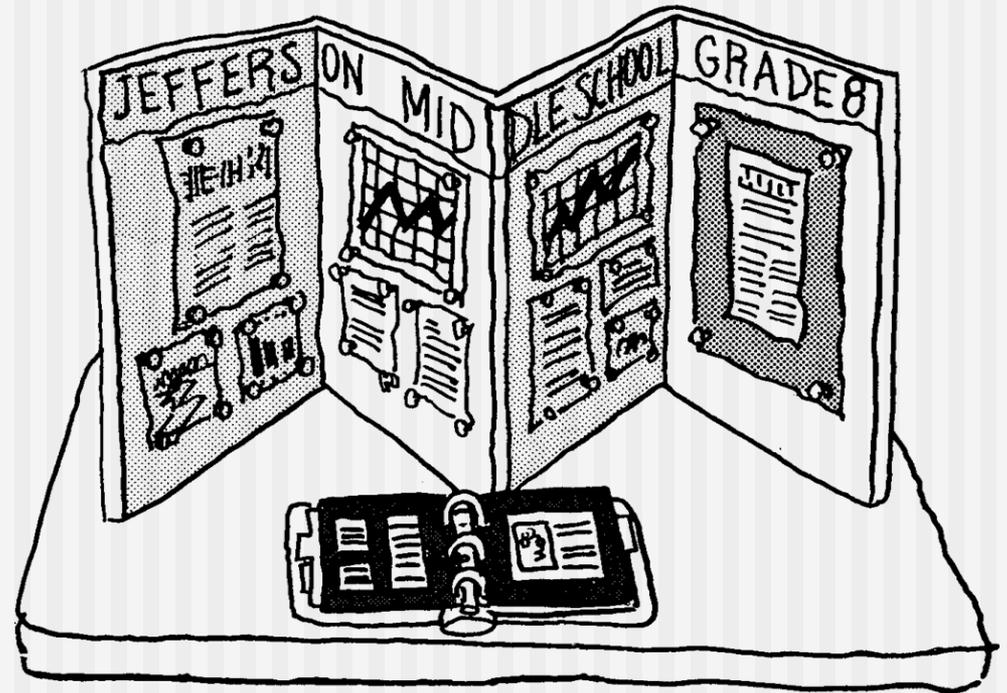
- As a class project, students work together to identify and study a problem in their community.
- They propose a solution in the form of a public policy recommendation.
- They develop an action plan for getting their policy proposal adopted and implemented.
- Students display their work in a portfolio and documentation binder and present it in a simulated public hearing.

# Portfolio and Documentation Binder



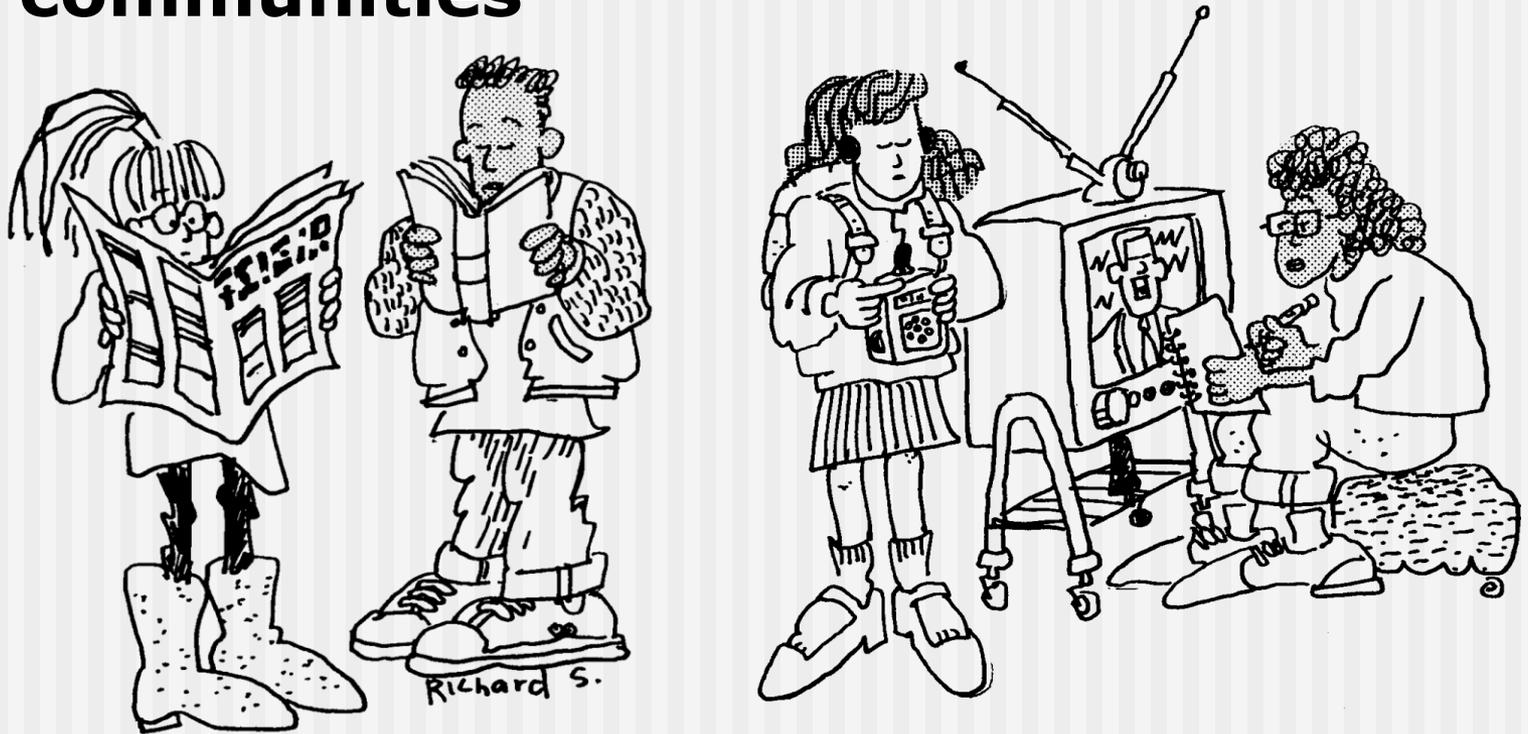
# Portfolio and Documentation Binder

- Explanation of the problem
- Evaluation of alternative policies
- Presentation of proposed policy
- Presentation of an action plan



# Project Citizen- Step 1

## Identifying public policy problems in communities



# Identifying Public Policy Problems

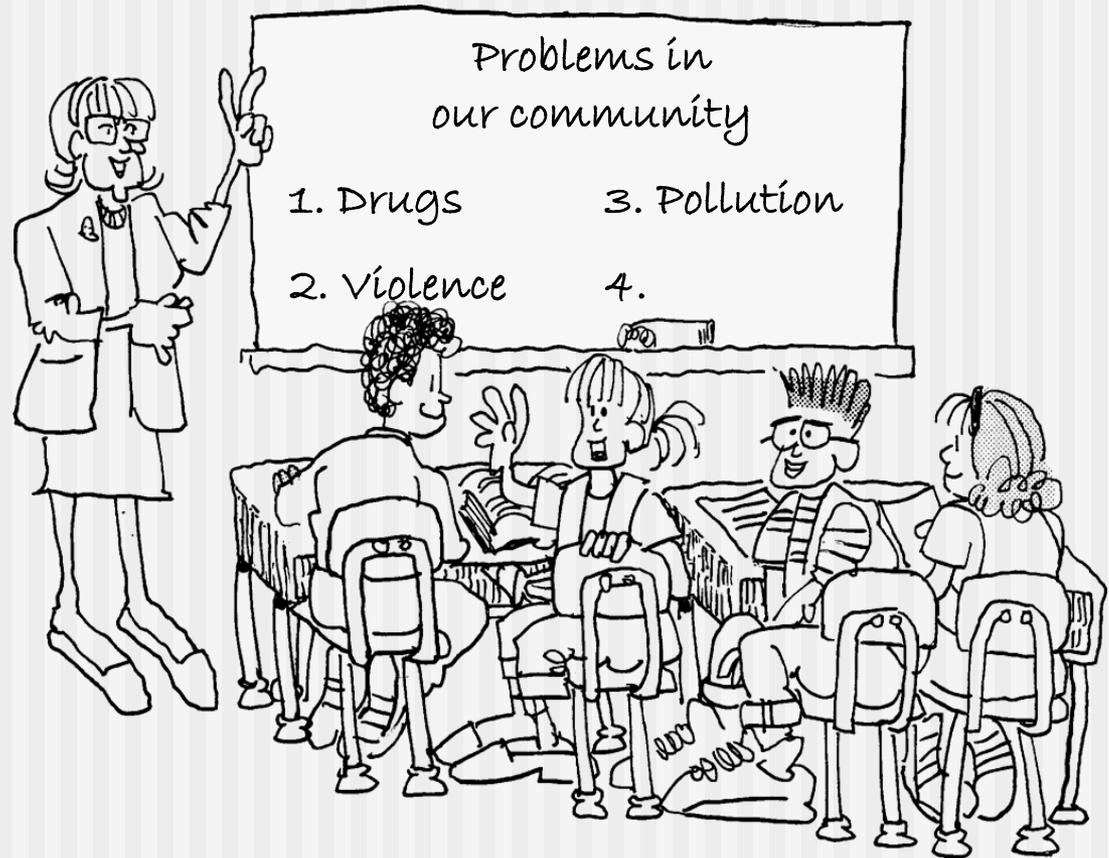


Students identify public policy problems in their communities by

- discussing them with each other
- interviewing family members and other adults
- reading newspapers and other print sources
- listening to news reports on radio and TV

# Project Citizen - Step 2

## Selecting a problem for class study



# Selecting a Problem for Class Study

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- Students present and discuss the problems they have identified and then select one problem for their class project

# Project Citizen - Step 3

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**Gathering  
information  
on the problem**

# Gathering Information on the Problem Selected



- Students gather information on the chosen public policy problem from a variety of sources



*Interviews and surveys* ♦ *Printed sources*

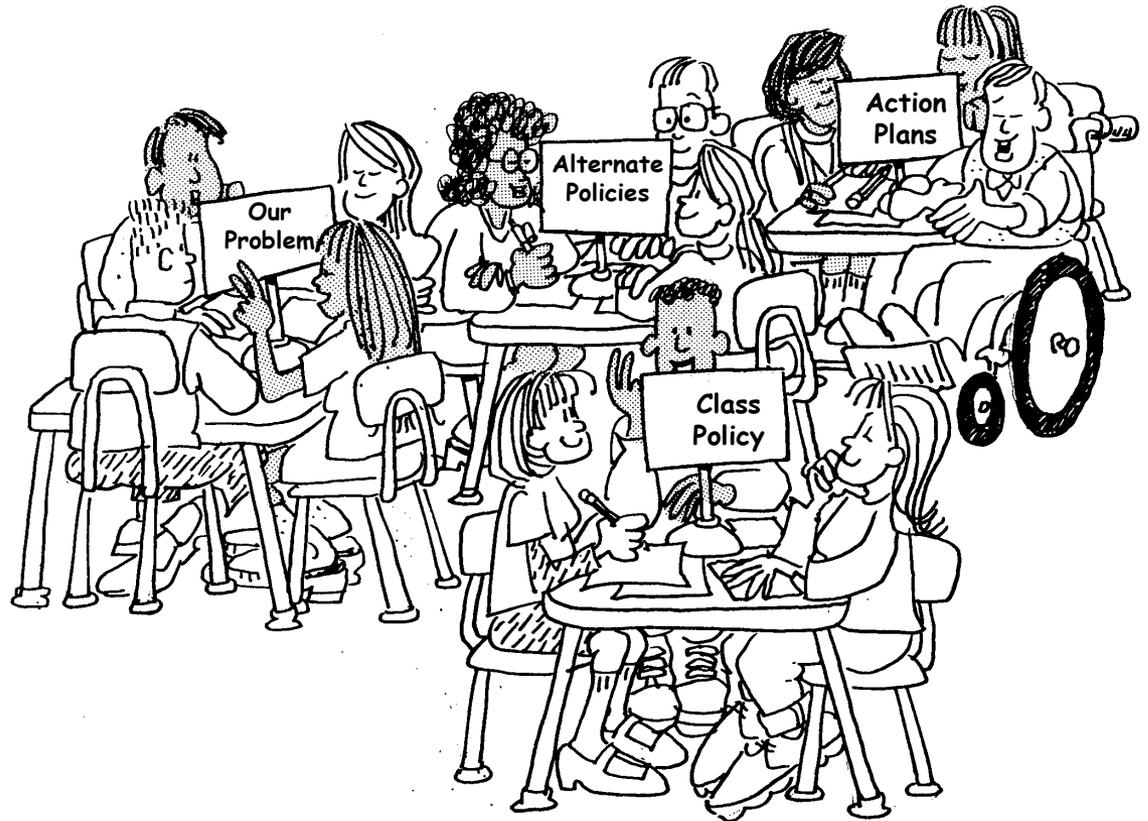
*Radio and television* ♦ *Libraries* ♦ *Internet*

*Scholars and professors* ♦ *Lawyers and judges*

*Community organizations and interest groups*

# Project Citizen – Step 4

**Developing  
a class  
portfolio**



# Developing a Class Portfolio

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- Group 1 - Develops an explanation of the problem
- Group 2 - Evaluates alternative policies
- Group 3 - Develops a proposed policy consistent with constitutional principles
- Group 4 - Develops an action plan

# Project Citizen - Step 5

## Presenting the portfolio



# Presenting the Portfolio

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- Student present their work in a simulated public hearing before a panel of evaluators chosen from the community
- Presentations by each of the four groups
  - Opening oral presentations (4 minutes)
  - Responses to questions (6 minutes)

# What are the Assessment Advantages of the Simulated Public Hearing?

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- Students work with clear, attainable goals that also set the criteria for performance
- Students connect with real world problems and events
- Students integrate a variety of related concepts and ideas
- Students may use knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines

# What are the Assessment Advantages of the Simulated Public Hearing?

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- Students learn to cooperate with peers in group settings
- Students relate assessment activities to instructional activities
- Students benefit from the involvement of parents and other community members

# Step 6 - Reflecting on the Learning Experience

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## 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

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## Developing Civic Skills

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

# Step 6 - Reflecting

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## 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

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## Experiencing Underlying Values and Principles

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

# Step 6 - Reflecting

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## 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

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## Fostering traits of character

- Individual responsibility
- Self discipline/self-governance
- Civility
- Courage
- Respect for the rights of other individuals
- Respect for law
- Honesty

# Step 6 - Reflecting

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## Fostering traits of character

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

# What are the Instructional Advantages of Project Citizen?

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- Students connect with real world problems and events
- Students integrate a variety of related concepts and ideas
- Students may use knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines
- Students work with clear, attainable goals

# What are the Instructional Advantages of Project Citizen?

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- Students learn to cooperate with peers in group settings
- Students evaluate their own progress through self-assessment
- Students relate assessment activities to instructional activities
- Students benefit from the involvement of parents and other community members

# Key Findings

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- 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

# Key Findings

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- Students develop a commitment to active citizenship
- Students become involved in their communities
- Students learn about specific community problems
- Students learn to work in groups
- Students develop important research and communication skills

# For more information contact

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