

CLOSE UP CIVIC CAPSTONE PROJECT

Overview

The Close Up Civic Capstone Project is a structured, student-directed curriculum intended to guide students through the stages of a Civic Readiness Project as outlined in the criteria for your state's civic seal. The curriculum builds students' civic and media literacy, scaffolds their issue identification and analysis, planning for action, and community action or engagement. The Capstone Project concludes with a formal presentation and a structured reflection in which students assess their work and learning.

Objectives

- Identify a civic issue facing them, their school, or their community;
- Analyze a civic issue, evaluate alternative solutions, design and/or execute a solution for this problem;
- Take informed action to address the civic issue;
- Reflect on what they have learned about their school or community from the Capstone project; and
- Make a presentation about their Civic Readiness Capstone project.

Training & Materials

- Prior to teachers implementing the curriculum, Close Up will provide a 2-3 hour training session to explore the content, review all curriculum, and model lesson plans. Close Up will collaborate with teachers as needed throughout the project.
- All teacher resources and student materials will be provided including lesson plans, a project outline, a student guidebook, supplementary materials such as PowerPoints, and background resources to guide teacher and student decision-making.

Project Implementation

Some educators may choose to implement the project using the unit model, with the entire project happening within one unit, where others may choose a semester-based model, reserving 1-2 days a week for the projects over the course of a semester. If possible, we recommend implementing the Phase 1 lesson plans sequentially and allowing for more time during Phase 2 & 3 to give students time to complete surveys or petitions and research on their issue.

Curriculum Sequence

Phase 1 – Understanding Community Issues *(Approximately three class periods)*

Students will identify elements and characteristics that contribute to a thriving community and will consider how their own neighborhoods meet--and fall short of meeting--the needs of community members. Students will participate in a deliberation of a local decision-making organization, such as an Advisory Neighborhood Commission, responding to a pressing community issue. Students will develop collective recommendations to a simulated local government or decision-making body to make their community more just and equitable. The deliberation experience will inform the selection of localized civic issues that students will address in their Capstone Project.

Phase 2 – Researching the Issue and Identifying Solutions *(Can be completed in small groups in class or individually outside of class)*

Students will develop a civic issue survey to distribute to community members to measure the real-world impact of their selected problem. Through data collection and analysis, committees will examine the root causes of their issue. Students will learn relevant research and media literacy skills through examining various publications and considering the characteristics of a reliable and trustworthy source. Students will use these skills to help them gather and organize knowledge, opinions, and policy solutions surrounding their issue.

Phase 3 – Taking Informed Action *(Can be completed in small groups in class or individually outside of class)*

Students will use their understanding of their community and local government and of their selected issue to choose between designing and carrying out one of two action-plan models: a public awareness initiative or a petitioning campaign. They will brainstorm individual and collective actions to execute their vision; analyze community resources; and develop action plans, commitments and timelines for bringing about change in their own communities.

Phase 4 – Presenting and Reflecting

Students will translate their research, finalized plans, and informed action experience into a cohesive presentation. In their presentations, students are tasked with providing evidence for their claims as well as addressing competing arguments which favor other community priorities or policy recommendations. Following practice presentations, students will receive peer feedback in preparation for their final delivery to a relevant committee or decision-making body. A final session will provide students with a constructive space to reflect on their Capstone experience. Collectively, students will compare their action plan implementation and consider the on-going development of their civic skill set.