

Project Citizen

By Jodi Buckson

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project (e.g. health, education, environmental or public safety need)?

Every year for the past three years, I have engaged students in service-learning through a program entitled Project Citizen. Through this program, my students have been able to tackle issues in their community such as the sanitation of school lavatories, abandoned housing, and rat infestation.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to school curriculum (e.g. what course outcomes were met and/or how did the project reinforce or enhance student academic learning)?

Each project that my students engaged in incorporated curricular objectives specific to their current unit of study. Through Project Citizen, our students learn the importance of their voice in their community. For example, students examine public policy which affects our communities. As they explore how these laws were formed, and the ability that citizens have to impact this legislation, they connect issues that they see in their own communities and devise projects to express their personal voice to things that they see in their communities. Objectives addressed included:

Social Studies

Political systems formulate specific public policies to further the general purposes of the human societies they govern.

Citizens who possess rights also bear responsibilities

7.1.A. The Foundation and Function of Government

3. Analyze the roles of governments around the world regarding public policy and issues.

7.1.B. Individual and Group Participation in the Political System

1. Analyze the methods used by individuals and groups to shape governmental policy and action

2. Analyze the importance of civic participation as a citizen of the world

Best Practice 3: How did you reflect on your experience throughout the project?

At the conclusion of each project, students' reflect upon the civic knowledge and civic skill they learned, be it intellectual and/or participatory. They also reflect on civic dispositions such democratic values and principles.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project?

One of the issues that my students expressed the most concern about was the condition of the lavatories in the school. The students were able to take what they learned about appropriately expressing their voice, and then created a campaign around advocating for more sanitary conditions in the school bathrooms. The students actually made this an interdisciplinary unit of study where we incorporated math, science, and health objectives. They researched the types of bacteria found in bathrooms and the negative effects of unsanitary conditions on students' health. The students surveyed students to see what their feelings were about the conditions of the bathrooms. They also interviewed the custodians to learn about the frequency and process in which the bathrooms were cleaned. They compiled their results and created charts and graphs to display their findings. They also created brochures about their experience from start to finish to share within their

school, as well as the neighboring school community. The students were really invested in this particular activity and were more engaged in their other classes as well due to their involvement with the service-learning project.

Best Practice 5: What community partners did you work with on this project (e.g. non-profits, civic organizations, business that provided donations, etc.)?

Different projects involved different community partners and school partners.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project?

We followed the Project Citizen format which had students research and select an issue to address, develop solutions for the problem, and then act to resolve the problem. Students administered surveys to students throughout the school and interviewed school staff.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project?

Through this service-learning project, students learned to work together and developed the needed tools for democratic citizenship. They also learned the importance of their voice and how they have the ability to monitor and influence public policy.