May 9th, 2014

Dear ______________________________,

We have a crisis! America faces many challenges, both at home and abroad. Too often, however, our democracy, the very system that should be able to address those challenges seem to fall short. A divided citizenry, Washington gridlock, an often superficial media, and the overwhelming influence of money in politics often prevent government from serving the common good.

“Let me be clear.” Because of these challenges, we need to exercise civics, or the study of the rights and duties of citizenship. We need effective citizens to work toward solving problems, addressing issues, and understanding the role that policy plays in doing so. To assist Washington, Ms. Ta, my Culver City educational consultant, informs me that you are required to complete a Civic Inquiry and Investigation Project to a) become informed and thoughtful citizens, b) participate in your communities, and c) promote civic equality for all. “Make no mistake,” as individuals, you may or may not achieve your long-term goals. Therefore, Ms. Ta would like you (and your group of 4 total members in the same period) to work effectively together to address a problem or issue in your community to enact change. This project is due on or before Thursday, May 29th, 2014 in order for me to learn your results before the school year ends. On that day, you will share a 5-minute presentation summarizing your group’s topic, question, investigation process and dialogue, findings, actions taken, and results along with a written report. Below are some steps to help guide you:

Step #1a: What will your TOPIC be?
Effective citizens pick a topic/issue to try to make an impact in the lives of the local and global community by exploring relationships between the issue, your actions, and policy. The topic should be related to a unit in your Biology course this year.

Step #1b: What is your CIVIC INQUIRY QUESTION?
Another thing effective citizens are good at is convincing others that their concerns, ideas, and views are important. Thus, you have to come up with a good civic inquiry question to engage others in discussion.

Step #2: What type of INVESTIGATION will you conduct?
Effective citizens educate themselves about the issues and continually set and reset goals. As you attempt to solve a problem, you’ll need to stay informed about it. Use your knowledge to set goals and plan. Be prepared to change your course of action along the way as you discover new information.

Step #3: What type of CIVIL DIALOGUE will you have?
“It won’t happen overnight.” Effective citizens often find their efforts paying off by making others aware of the situation, by building constituencies who will move the cause further, or by inspiring others to be more engaged in the issue.

Step #4: How will you COMMUNICATE CONCLUSIONS?
In the end, effective citizens would have worked to address a problem or issue and have examined the role that policy plays in this. Thus, they will need to inform a wider audience of their findings after extensive efforts to inform themselves.

Step #5: How will you TAKE INFORMED ACTION?
Lastly, as effective citizens work to address problems, they usually have to take a series of civic actions. Rarely does just one action do the trick. Effective citizens start with simple actions and keep trying different things.

“Change isn’t easy.” I am counting on you to exercise good citizenship skills to make the necessary changes in your local and broader community. Good luck!
## Civic Action Culminating Task Rubric

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**Overall: Completeness, Clarity, Support, Effort**

--Makes good use of time
--Shows resiliency in response to obstacles
--Demonstrates willingness to develop new skills
--Portfolio is well-organized
--Portfolio clearly written, grammatical, and correctly spelled
--Major points and arguments easy to understand

**Reflection (Individual Grade)**

--Answers all questions
--Demonstrates that you have thought carefully about your experience
--Demonstrates what you have learned from the portfolio development

**Extra Credit (Individual Grade)**

**Step #5: Take Informed Action**

--Demonstrates a deep responsibility to improve community/society
--Demonstrates power of youth to influence decisions
--Demonstrates and fulfills commitment to create positive change
--Encourages dialogue and trust by empowering others to take civic action
--Supplies a variety of evidence for civic actions (ex: photos, letters, e-mails, agendas, articles, etc.)
--Civic action taken address the problem directly
--Civic action taken is practical and realistic
## Civic Action Culminating Task Planning Guide

### Civic Inquiry and Investigation

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### Step #1a: Topic

**First semester:** Scientific Method, Ecology, and Cell Biology

**Second semester:** Genetics I (Central Dogma), Genetics II (Mendelian Genetics), and Evolution

1a.1) First, **pick a unit** that you are interested in learning more about from our Biology units.

1a.2) Next, **brainstorm 3-5 specific topics/issues** from that unit. What is an important issue from Biology that relates to your community? Rank them in order of preference. You will eventually **pick 1 specific topic/issue** as each team chooses the topic they will investigate.

### Step #1b: Civic Inquiry Question

**A strong inquiry question:**

- Is clear, specific, authentic, and manageable
- Should have multiple and competing answers/viewpoints
- Doesn’t lead to an answer right away
- Cannot be answered with a simple “yes/no”
- Will involve researching evidence to answer the question
- Will lead to developing cognitive and participatory skills to result in students taking informed civic action in the form of policy or direct service

1b.1) **What problem, issue, or policy** do you propose to work on? *(TIP: Choose something with a chance you can have an impact on. Be as specific as possible, narrowing down big issues.)*

1b.2) **Describe the problem and its effects on people.** *(TIP: The problem should affect more people than just YOU. Think about how this affects quality of life issues and economic, physical, environmental, and emotional impacts. Think about just/fair treatment of people.)*
1b.3) How is the problem or issue related to policy*? As you take civic actions, you’ll need to deal with public policy in some way. (*TIP: Perhaps you think new policy should be created or maybe you think that existing policy should be modified or eliminated. It could be that you can use policy to persuade someone to change a situation. Or perhaps you are trying to impact the way a policy is enforced.*)

1b.4) Why do you want to work on this? Why do you think it is important? (*TIP: Provide evidence that will convince your teacher and others that your issue is important. You can describe it, but adding pictures, articles, or other evidence will help.*)

1b.5) What are the first few action steps you would do to answer this question? (*TIP: Show that you are giving this a lot of thought. At this stage, you might think about learning more about your issue. Be specific. For example, “research ..., find out..., call..., look up..., talk to..., e-mail....”*)

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*What Is Policy?*

**Policy:** A principle, plan, or course of action, as pursued by a government, organization, or individual

**Public policies:** The policies that governments adopt to solve problems

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Possible On-Line Resources (organized alphabetically):

- Bioethics Education Project: [http://www.beepe.ac.uk/content/77.0.html](http://www.beepe.ac.uk/content/77.0.html)
**Step #2: Investigation**

Refine your civic inquiry question (Step #1b) by completing the root cause tree.

Review Step #1b.5 for your first steps to continue your investigation.

How will you gather, evaluate, and analyze evidence in response to your civic inquiry question in Step #1b?

How will you research the related facts and background information? What sources will you use? Why is this an issue in your community? What background information, viewpoint, and policies do we currently have on the issue? Be sure to research both sides of the issue.

2.1) **Root Cause Tree** (see back)

2.2) Based on your root cause tree, what is your goal? What would you like to see happen to address the causes of the problem? *(TIP: Describe what would be different if the problem or issue was resolved. You should relate this to the impacts on people you described in Step #1b.2.)*

2.3) What are some sources you are using to conduct your investigation. *(TIP: Be sure to refer to the “Source Evaluation Cheat Sheet” to evaluate if the source is credible and reliable.)*

2.4) How you will organize, store, and share the information you collect? *(TIP: Ideas include a file folder, log, portfolio, flashdrive, Google Drive, electronic files that you share with your group, etc.)*

2.5) What is your next civic action? Be specific. For example, “call ____ to find out ____ , search the web to find ________.” Be sure to explain the purpose of this action. *(TIP: Be as specific as you can. The action should lead toward answering at least one of the questions you listed in Step #2.3.)*
Step #4: Communicate Conclusions

How will you collaborate to reach and communicate your conclusions to inform others of your investigation and findings? Note: You may or may not reach a common consensus in your group when determining conclusions, which is ok! Just be sure to explain who thinks what.

By now, you may have noticed the similarities between the steps of taking civic action and the scientific method—asking a question, making observations, forming a hypothesis, designing a procedure, collecting data, and making conclusions—all while collaborating with others. Just like in science, be as clear and as specific as possible when you communicate your conclusions to others. Base your information on your research/evidence to establish credibility and explain what you have been doing to research the problem.

Report

This should be typed.

Section 1: Introduction
- What are your names? Grades in school?
- What was the purpose of this assignment?

Section 2: Topic and Civic Inquiry Question (Step #1)
- What was your topic and civic inquiry question?
- Why did you choose it? Why is it an important question?
- How does the question relate to a unit learned in Biology? Include at least 5 vocabulary words discussed in class.
- What are some problems related to that question? How serious is the problem? How widespread? How urgent is the need to address it?

Section 3: Investigation (Step #2)
You do NOT have to answer every question below, but you should attempt to answer as many as possible.
- Why is this a problem? What are the causes and effects of your topic/question?
- What are the pros/cons of your topic/question?
- What other background information is important for others to know about your topic/question?
- What communities are being affected by this problem (school, neighborhood, city, county, state, nation)? How does this issue impact that community? Why should we care?
- Is there an existing law or policy for dealing with the problem? Is the policy in a law, regulation, governmental order, or other? Briefly describe the public policy.
- Is the existing policy adequate to solve the problem? Why or why not? Is the policy adequate but not being enforced? Briefly explain. If there is not a policy, why do you think this is true?
- What is the government currently doing about the problem? Should the problem be handled by the government? Why or why not?
- Should anyone else in the community take responsibility for solving the problem? Should the government seek the assistance of civil society (regular citizens) and/or the private companies in dealing with the problem? Why or why not?
- Who are the major individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the problem? For each individual, group, or organization: What is their position on the problem? Why are they interested? What solutions are they suggesting? What are the advantages of their position? What are the disadvantages of their position? How are they trying to influence government to adopt their view?
- What disagreements, if any, are there in your community about this problem and the way it is being handled?
- How can you influence government to make changes to help with the problem?
Section 4: Civil Dialogue (Step #3)
• What was the purpose of the “Head-to-Head” dialogue activity?
• Did your groups’ ideas change after completing the activity? Why or why not? What new ideas did your dialogue partners give you?
• What ideas were the same as your partners? What ideas were different?
• Additional comments to add?

Section 5: Communicate Conclusions (Step #4)
• What are some possible solution(s) to your topic/problem? (Bear in mind that the solution should be constitutional and legal.) For each possible solution: What are the advantages of this policy? What are the disadvantages of this policy?
• Which of the possible solutions above might be the best public policy to deal with this problem? Why is it the best one? Briefly describe your solution. Who might be against your solution and why? How would you address your critics?
• What level of government (city, state, national, global) would be responsible for carrying out your proposed policy? Why would this level of government be responsible (as opposed to another level)?

Section 6: Take Informed Action (Step #5)
• What action(s) did you take as a group? Why did you choose these action(s)? What else could you do if you had more time and resources?
• If you did the extra credit: What action(s) did you take individually: Why did you choose these action(s)? What else could you do if you had more time and resources?

Section 7: Conclusion
• Summarize the key points in your report body.
• What did you learn as a group?
• Did you feel that the action taken will have an effect on the problem? Will it have an effect on the community and its members? Why or why not?
• Let the reader know you would be willing to research and discuss the issue further.

Section 8: Works Cited
List of resources (at least 4 different sources) that you used for your C.T. Follow the format provided in your English class. See Ms. Ta if you need help with documenting your sources.

Class Presentation
Prepare a 3-5 minute presentation (PowerPoint or Google Presentation) to illustrate the problem and the solution you are proposing. Illustrate your info using photos, graphics, charts, pictures, videos, e-mails, notes, etc. We may have other non-student members in your audience, so do a good job!

Summarize the key findings from your report.
• What problem, issue, or policy did you work on and what did you learn about it?
• How did you try to impact this problem, issue, policy? Summarize your civic action taken and the possible effects.
• What impact did you make? Remember, this could include many things like impacting public policy or raising others’ awareness.
• What recommendations would you make to the next person who chose to work on this issue? What should they do the same way or differently?
• Consider what else might be done if there were more time, resources, etc.
• Describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes you developed through the C.T.
Reflection:
Answer each question in at least 3 sentences. This should be typed.
1. What did you learn about being a good citizen? What did you personally learn about public policy from working with my group? What have you learned about the challenges and opportunities for civic action? How might you continue taking civic action in the future?
2. What science or public policy information did you learn?
3. What did you learn about yourself? What skills did you acquire or improve on in this project?
4. What are the advantages of working as a team? Disadvantages? Were there any issues with any group members? Please explain clearly.
5. What was your hardest/least favorite part of project?
6. What was your best/favorite part?
7. What would you want to do differently if we were to develop another portfolio on another public policy issue?
8. What are some suggestions for improvements to the C.T. for next year for Ms. Ta?

Project Portfolio Checklist

Group (Attach all together as a group):
☐ Did you include the typed report with all the 8 required sections?
☐ Did you share via Google Drive, e-mail, or save on a flashdrive the presentation to Ms. Ta? (Step #4 Communicate Conclusions)
☐ Did you include evidence of Step #5 (Take Informed Action) that you completed as a group?
☐ Did you include a printout of your presentation slides (9 per page)?
☐ Did you include any additional materials (article printouts, website printouts, etc.)

Individual (Attach all together for EACH group member):
☐ Did you include evidence of Step #2 (Investigation) – Form 8: Documentation of Information from the Internet and/or Pro/Con lists
☐ Did you include evidence of Step #3 (Civil Dialogue) – “Head-to-Head” activity
☐ For extra credit, did you include evidence of Step #5 (Take Informed Action) that you completed on your own?
☐ Did you include your typed reflection?
Step #3: Civil Dialogue

Before you make a conclusion, how will you discuss the issue and the sides of the issue with others?

Topic: ____________________________________________________________

Civic Inquiry Question: ____________________________________________

Partner’s Name: ___________________________________________________

1. YOU: Write a response to the civic inquiry question above. What do you know about the question? What is your opinion on it? (3 minutes):

2. PARTNER: Read the response to #1. Do you agree or disagree with that response? Why? What do you know about the question above? What is your opinion on it? (3 minutes):
3. YOU: Read the response to #2. Do you agree or disagree with that response? Why? Anything to add? (2 minutes):

4. PARTNER: Read the response to #3. Do you agree or disagree with that response? Why? Anything to add? (2 minutes):

5. Did your ideas change during this activity? Why or why not? What new ideas did your partner give you? What ideas did you both agree on? Disagree on? Additional notes? (3 minutes)
Ta’s notes for Head-to-Head Activity:
Partner randomly using index cards. Be sure not in same C.T. group.
Move to lab tables, 2 per table. Put index cards on table.
Make copies
Do twice if time allows
Allow students to meet with group beforehand to compare notes
Meet after to compare notes
Step #5: Take Informed Action

What steps will you take to inform others, promote public policy, and/or to start changes to respond to the issues raised in your inquiry question and investigation? Bonus: Some actions may count as community service learning hours.

Here is a list of possible civic actions, but feel free to think of your own. Choose 1 below to complete as a group. Extra Credit: Choose 1 below to complete on your own. Be sure to get approval before taking action.

- Going Public with a Message
  - write for a public audience (newspaper, blog, tweet)
  - add your comment to a widely-read blog or respond to a widely-followed Twitter
  - present to a public audience
  - talk to someone in the community
  - use social media to circulate the message
  - speaking at a community event to express opinion/show support
  - engage in dialogue with community members (in and out of school)
  - create a public-service announcement (PSA) and post it online
  - create or edit and share provocative/sharable media (images, cartoons, video clips, YouTube)

- Political Work
  - phone banking
  - door-to-door
  - volunteering on a campaign or candidacy
  - participating on a city-level committee
  - Twitter or Facebook campaign to influence how people in your network vote in upcoming election
  - fundraising for a candidate or cause (ex: via Facebook)
  - lobbying to persuade politicians to pass/oppose laws
  - meeting with a lawmaker

- Education
  - share information from a community survey, oral history, interview
  - run a workshop
  - teach someone about an issue
  - invite guest speakers for a presentation
  - create a webpage, wiki page, etc.
  - create a webinar
  - make a classroom presentation in your own or other classroom
  - exhibit learning to community members
  - learn about community organizations and share your findings
  - create a blog about an issue
  - host a community event
  - form an organization or club
  - make info graphics to educate others
  - create an online resource on a topic (through Gooru, VoiceThread, Google Sites, etc.)

- Targeted Action
  - call/email a Congress person or someone with authority
  - create a petition (online or paper)
  - organize a boycott
  - organize an action (Twitter, social media and texts are all common tools that young activists use to mobilize their networks)
  - starting a campaign
  - create a Kickstarter to address a community need
  - write a letter (to editor, officials, etc.)
  - tweet to a political group or to a local, state or national officeholder
  - participate/organize protest action
  - flash mob with your message

Be sure to write a thank-you note or e-mail to anyone who assists you with your project. A handwritten note is preferred but a thank-you e-mail is better than nothing.

As you think about action in the community, it can get overwhelming. One helpful approach is to look at the list above and identify those actions that seem like they could be done with a small amount of preparation and manpower and those that would require much more. When trying action in the community, it is important to assess you and your group member’s capacity to take on action and strengths/weaknesses before deciding which direction to move in. This is also an organic process; actions evolve as situations change.
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**Deductions:** Late = -15 points per day  
Reflection missing = -25 points (individual)  
Additions: Extra credit = +25 points (individual)

Comments: