**Civics in Action – Get Involved!**

The word “Democracy” comes from the Greek “*demos*,” or people, and “*kratos*” or rule. The goal of this project is to show you how to be active participants in our democracy and also to encourage you to play a role in strengthening your community through active citizenship.

**Overview:** The ‘Civics in Action’ (CIA) project is designed to encourage students to become informed, involved citizens. It is an opportunity for you to become an active participant by observing and actively engaging in the civic process. Because students have varying interests, execution of the project will vary. Possible options include: Attending a virtual lecture at a local university about a political topic, phone banking for a local candidate, attending or zooming into a Board of Education or Town Council meeting, writing a letter to the editor for a local newspaper or taking part in a civic-oriented school club or organization. Choose something that you can get excited about!

**Step 1: Getting Started:** Consider issues you care about - anything from local issues such as property tax rates or challenges your school is facing to national issues such as climate change or voter turnout. As you consider these challenges, you must also look deeper into the issues you are considering by researching.

**Step 2: Make a plan:**  Once you have settled on a challenge you are passionate about, consider purposeful action steps that you can take that will help to address the issue. This could take the form of attending a conference, participating in a meeting, or writing a letter to the editor. Your action should be carefully tailored to address the specific issue you would like to address.

**Step 3: Product:** Once you have selected and engaged in your CIA topic, you must reflect on your experience. Students will write a three page (typed and doubles-spaced) summary and reflection of their experience.

**Paragraph #1 - Background:** Summarize your civic engagement. Provide specific detail:

* Where and when did you engage in the civic process?
* How long were you involved?
* What did you experience while there/taking part?
* Who else was involved?
* What information was presented / what did you learn?

**Paragraph #2 - Connection to course content:** Connect your civic engagement to the class curriculum and study of civics and politics, and answer at least some of the following questions:

* How does your engagement connect to the class curriculum: philosophical concepts of government? Citizenship? Power? Political ideology? Other connections?
* How did your experience help you understand the way the American democracy and our system of government works?
* How does the activity you participated in and what you learned from your activity help contribute to the community that you live in?

**Paragraph #3 - Personal reflection:** The final paragraph should be your personal reflection; it should answer *some* (select only the questions that are most relevant to the particular action you took) of the following or reveal other relevant self-evaluation and reflective thought:

* Why did you choose this activity?
* How did this experience impact you? What surprised you about the experience?
* How did your civic engagement make you think about the role you will play in your government and/or community?
* How will your participation in this activity likely impact your engagement in politics and civic activity in the future?
* If your CIA engagement caused your political views or feelings about politics to change in any meaningful way, explain that change and why it occurred.
* Did you enjoy your experience? Why or why not?

You must also confirm that you engaged in your civic activity – Provide a parent signature affirming your participation OR provide a short video or photograph or other evidence that shows you have completed your project.

**Assessment:** Your civic engagement and writing will be worth 50 pts.

**Student Options/Opportunities:** Below is a menu of options that students may select. This list is not exhaustive, and local opportunities may also be announced in class. Many of these options will not necessarily result in full credit on this assignment - your individual participation and written work will determine your grade. Because this is a “Civics in Action” project, your level of direct engagement is an important consideration in your final grade on this assignment. For example, if two students attended a Town Council meeting and one quietly took notes and the other took notes and also spoke during the public comment section to propose a change to the town or make a suggestion, that student who took part in the public comment section of the meeting would earn more credit for the additional involvement even though both students may have spent the same amount of time on their project.

Here are a few organizations or opportunities to complete your project (many have online options):

* [UConn - Dodd Center](https://dodd.uconn.edu/upcoming-events/)
* [Connecticut Old State House](https://www.cga.ct.gov/osh/default.asp)
* Attend a debate for a candidate on the ballot in Connecticut.
* Attend a zoom speech by a candidate or expert in an area related to Politics.
* Attend / participate in a campaign
  + Phone bank
  + Post-card writing
  + Promote voter registration
  + Other activity? (see your teacher)
* Attend / participate in a meeting or activity related to a political interest you have
  + Example: environmental issues: <https://www.easternctgreenaction.com/>
* Attend a Town Committee Meeting (Democrat, Republican or third party if available) in your home town – contact the appropriate organization to ask for meeting times and other information. Meetings are typically open to the public, but it is polite to ask permission to join the meeting to observe.
* Attend a Town Council, Board of Education or other local elected board meeting. Meetings are typically open to the public - most meetings allow time for public comment. Look for an agenda posted before attending - this will give you a better sense of what to expect at the meeting.

**Additional Options/Opportunities:**

* Attend or speak at a public event or public hearing at the State Capitol or Legislative Office Building.
  + [www.cga.ct.gov](http://../Downloads/www.cga.ct.gov)
* Write a letter to the editor for a local newspaper
* Create or take part in a club or event that promotes civic engagement

\*As a general rule, your civic engagement should last a *minimum* of an hour in order to earn credit. Certain projects will require significantly more than an hour. In many cases, follow-up work will be appropriate. For example, if you learn about an issue confronting the town or school from a Board of Education Meeting or Town Council Meeting, you may decide you can contribute to helping to resolve that issue through action steps. Be creative!! Additional time spent will be considered towards your final grade. We recognize transportation can be a constraint and you should choose your CIA project wisely based on your individual circumstances. Plan ahead!

If you have a question about what would qualify as civic engagement because you have an idea that is not listed above, please check with your teacher for approval. During your engagement, or shortly after, you should take notes. Those notes will help you write your summary/reflection.

**Due Date:**  **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.  **Be prepared to explain to the class what you learned and experienced during this activity!**  (If you have a legitimate need for a time-extension to complete this activity, see your teacher for approval)

You are encouraged to brainstorm and plan for your Civics in Action project with your family. Please review the Civics in Action project at home and consider challenges and opportunities that may arise.

\*A minimum 1 hour time-commitment and engagement in a relevant, appropriate event or activity is needed to earn credit for the CIA project – higher levels of community engagement and/or time will earn a better grade.

**Civics in Action Rubric:**

***Civic Engagement*:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **20-19** | **18-17** | **16-15** | **14-13** | **12 and below** |
| Action *steps* taken were designed effectively towards addressing identified issue/problem - evidence of *planning*, *preparation, strategic thinking* and *over one hour* of time spent. | Action steps were taken or designed effectively at addressing an identified problem. Evidence of some planning and some preparation, as well as evidence of one hour of time spent or more. | Action was taken that was designed to address an issue. Action may have lacked some planning or active engagement. Evidence of one hour of time spent or more. | Limited planning, evidence of passive engagement, little to no evidence of active engagement. Evidence of an hour or less of time spent. | Less than one hour spent, little to no evidence that student engagement was designed to address an identified issue. |

***Written Reflection*:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **30-27** | **26-24** | **23-21** | **20-18** | **17 and below** |
| Written reflection is thorough, *clearly explains engagement*, makes *insightful connections to the class curriculum* and shows *evidence of thoughtful reflection*. Evidence of either *metacognition* and/or *strong self-awareness* is present. Writing is *edited and well organized*. | Written reflection explains engagement and makes relevant connections to class. Evidence of reflection present in writing but may not include metacognition or deep self-awareness. Writing is edited and organized. | Written reflection is included and summarizes work. Incomplete references to class content and/or incomplete self-reflection that is not fully developed. Writing has limited organization and/or lacking editing. | Reflection is incomplete and missing relevant information about action taken. Reflective writing is not fully developed. Additional editing needed. | Writing lacks a clear explanation of action taken, limited or no connection to class curriculum, and reflection is limited to a summary of the action taken, and does not address personal growth or enhanced understanding as a result of the action taken. |

**Civics in Action -- verification form**

**This form is only necessary if you have not provided other evidence that you have taken part in your CIA activity:**

Please use this form as needed to verify completion of your CIA activity.

**Name of Activity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date of Activity: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Project contact or parent name** (*print*): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Project contact or parent name**  **(***signature***)**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact information**:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_