**WCSD Civics in Action**

**Project & Showcase**

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**Secondary Curriculum & Instruction**

**Grades 6-12**

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**Part I. WCSD Civics in Action FAQs**

**Why are we focusing on civics education?**

Civics is one of the five content themes included in all grade levels of the Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies (NVACS-SS). Civics education is grounded in a rigorous and non-partisan study of history in which students are exposed to all sides of major constitutional debates and given the tools to practice engaging in dialogue and deliberation to come to their own informed conclusions.[[1]](#footnote-1) Additionally, civics instruction focuses on cultivating an understanding of democratic processes and governmental structures necessary to effectively participate and exercise one’s rights and responsibilities in a participatory democracy. To support these efforts, the disciplinary skill standards within the NVACS-SS require all students in grades K-12 to engage in inquiry processes that result in taking informed action on current issues. Taking informed action should occur as the culmination of the study of historical content and research regarding an issue of relevance and importance to students. Focusing on civics throughout the study of history builds background knowledge and an understanding of systems and institutions within government and how individuals and groups have utilized these systems and processes to address needs in their communities.

**What is *Civics in Action*?**

*Civics in Action* refers to active participation and engagement in our democratic system. It is the result of the cultivation of democratic dispositions and skills that enable community members to actively engage in democratic processes within their communities. The NVACS-SS refer to this process as “taking informed action.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The ability to take informed action, utilizing democratic processes, is critical to the rights and responsibilities of productive community members in civil society. Civic participation is essential to a thriving and healthy community in a democratic system. Classroom instruction must extend beyond teaching facts about civics and ensure that students have real-world opportunities to practice civics.[[3]](#footnote-3) Students need regular opportunities to take well-informed stances on issues and engage with perspectives that differ from their own. Our goal is to equip students with the knowledge and skills essential to support their ability to take informed action on issues of relevance and importance to them.

**Why are all 6th – 12th grade social studies students expected to complete a *Civics in Action Project*?**

To ensure that students will have the opportunity to engage in and meet all grade-level standards (NVACS-SS) it is imperative that all students complete a *Civics in Action Project* that demonstrates their ability to take informed action. Students should be able to utilize their knowledge of historical contexts, inquiry processes and civics to evaluate current issues and propose solutions or actions to address those issues. Additionally, WCSD believes that finding relevance in learning and the fostering of student voice and agency is critical to the educational journey of our students. Participation in the *Civics in Action Project* allows students to connect their learning of history to the present, building relevance and meaning. Similarly, it provides opportunity for students to engage on issues of importance to them in meaningful ways in their communities.

**How does the *Civics in Action Project* help students achieve the** **Nevada Seal of Civics**?

The Nevada Seal of Civics is a prestigious designation available to qualifying students upon graduation from high-school in Nevada. Students must fulfill all requirements of the seal to qualify, including the completion of a rigorous service-learning project. The service-learning project outlined as a requirement of the seal necessitates that students engage in the full inquiry process as identified in the NVACS-SS, culminating with the implementation of a taking informed action project. Students are required to show proof of implementation and reflection. Completion of the *Civics in Action Project* will fulfill this requirement for the Nevada Seal of Civics, significantly increasing the ability for many of our WCSD graduates to qualify for this designation.

**What instructional materials can teachers use to implement the *Civics in Action Project*?**

WCSD Secondary Curriculum & Instruction facilitated the development of a Taking Informed Action Framework created in collaboration with secondary teachers in our district. This framework is grounded in research-based best practices aligned to the NVACS-SS (see Appendix A). There are additional resources from local and national organizations included in this manual. Teachers are encouraged to utilize these frameworks and resources or to create their own that support the full implementation of a cycle of inquiry (disciplinary skill standards) culminating in reflection on an action project.

**What training and support is WCSD Secondary Curriculum & Instruction providing for teachers?**

Instructional materials to support implementation of the project are included in this manual. Additionally, teachers have the opportunity to participate in a professional learning cohort that will provide training on the use of these materials. The cohort members will engage in a “plan, do, study” model of professional learning to support implementation, make modifications along the way, and evaluate successes and challenges. Teachers will register for this cohort opportunity in MyPGS.

**What is the *Civics in Action Project* Showcase?**

WCSD Secondary Curriculum & Instruction will host a culminating showcase of student *Civics in Action Projects* in late Spring. This showcase will celebrate the many ways that students have completed civic action projects in their community. Award winners will not be selected, but commendations may be given out. All schools are encouraged to participate in this voluntary showcase. Guidance and timelines for school participation are included in this manual. School sites will determine an appropriate process to showcase and celebrate their students’ projects to include a process to determine which student projects will be selected for the district-level showcase. All students participating in the district-level showcase will receive a certificate of recognition for their participation.

**How do my students participate in the *Civics in Action Project* Showcase?**

Follow the guidelines provided. Teachers interested in participating in the district-level showcase will need to submit notification of participation. Once a school-site has confirmed participation, teachers will implement *Civics in Action Projects*, develop a process for showcasing and celebrating student projects at their site, and then select students to represent their school at the district-level showcase.

**Part II. WCSD Civics in Action Project Criteria & Showcase Information**

**Civics in Action Project Criteria**

Teachers will facilitate and provide guidance for students to engage in and complete civics in action projects. These projects can be individual, group, or whole class projects. Each student should play an engaged role throughout the entirety of the project. Completed projects that are selected to represent schools for the district showcase must include all 6 criteria.

1. Students select an issue area after exploring ways in which they can positively impact their community (local, regional, global).
2. Students research the issue and summarize their findings.
3. Students identify action steps to address the issue and design a process for implementation.
4. Students complete action steps.
5. Students engage with an authentic audience as part of the implementation or to share outcomes.
6. Students engage in reflection.

District Showcase Timeline

Related instruction and student engagement in the project may occur throughout the school year.

**District Showcase Information**

**Participation Steps**

All middle and high schools are encouraged to participate in the district showcase. To participate in the showcase, schools must complete the following steps.

**Step 1.** Submit the Notification of School Participation Microsoft Form by January 31st

**Step 2**. Complete a school site showcase, presentation, or celebration of student projects by April 12th.

**Step 3.** Submit names of students selected to represent your school in the district showcase via Microsoft Forms by April 17th.

**Step 4:** Participate in the District Showcase on May 4th. Teachers should be in attendance.

**Showcase Presentation Requirements**

Students will create an original display that highlights and celebrates the key components of their Civics in Action Project and present their projects in a showcase or “science fair” format. Showcase presentations must adhere to the following criteria.

1. All 6 of the project criteria must be represented and included in the display.
2. Display should be able to sit atop a table and should not exceed the following dimensions 36”x48”.
3. Students must remain next to their project for the duration of the showcase.
4. Students should be prepared to answer questions and discuss their projects with community members.
5. Students should dress appropriately in presentation attire (no rips, no midriffs, no tank tops, etc.).

**Part III. Resources to Build Background & Understanding for Teachers**



Graphic Source: InquireED

1. [Taking Informed Action to Engage Students in Civic Life](http://www.c3teachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Levinson_Levine.pdf)
* Background overview and justification
1. [Completing the Inquiry Arc: Exploring Dimension 4 of the C3 Framework](https://www.socialstudies.org/completing-inquiry-arc-exploring-dimension-4-c3-framework)
* Explore how to support students communicating and critiquing conclusions and taking informed action.
1. [4 Guidelines for Inspiring Students to Take Informed Action on Current Issues - Social Studies](https://www.socialstudies.com/blog/four-guidelines-for-inspiring-students-to-take-informed-action-on-current-issues/)
* Give students time and resources to develop a well-informed opinion.
* Choose actions that have an impact.
* Stick to activities that are safe for all students.
* Respect the diversity of students’ opinions.
1. [How to Teach Students to Take Informed Action in the Classroom - Social Studies](https://www.socialstudies.com/blog/how-to-teach-students-to-take-informed-action-in-the-classroom/)
* Blog post with instructional moves and ideas to implement.
1. [Taking Informed Action - C3 Teachers](https://c3teachers.org/category/taking-informed-action/)
* General list of blog posts to support Taking Informed Action by the C3 Teachers
1. [Dining with Democracy: Discussion as Informed Action](https://cdn.ymaws.com/epfp.iel.org/resource/resmgr/wj_documents/2020_social_education_DwD.pdf)
* Discussion as the cornerstone for inquiry
1. [How Informed Does Informed Action Have To Be? - C3 Teachers](https://c3teachers.org/how-informed-does-informed-action-have-to-be/)
* Examines the balance between content and action.
1. [Guiding Students to See Themselves as Changemakers (Edutopia)](https://www.edutopia.org/article/guiding-students-see-themselves-changemakers)
* Address helping students break down big issues to identify more accessible challenges

**Part IV. OPTIONAL Frameworks/Pathways for Civics in Action Projects**

\*These frameworks or pathways are available to serve as guidance for teachers when implementing the Civics in Action Project. Teachers may choose to use any standards-aligned framework or instructional materials they prefer.

\*Portions of these resources are included in this manual. For full resources please follow links on the digital version on the C&I Homepage or the MS and HS Teacher Community Team.

1. WCSD Taking Informed Action Framework
2. [Be A Citizen: Civic Action Project Guide](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YMyLh9D--z-f515k1-UBiTjWjy2AtLzStEQfiF2yg38/edit)
3. [The Smithsonian: NK 360\* Framework for Action](https://americanindian.si.edu/NK360/removal/pdf/taking-informed-action-student.pdf)
4. [Center for Civic Education: Project Citizen](https://www.civiced.org/project-citizen/resources)
5. [Civic Action Project Toolkit](https://crfcap.org/mod/page/view.php?id=225)
6. [iCivics](https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/local-solutions)

**Student Examples of Taking Informed Action**

\*Find links to these articles in the digital version on the C&I Homepage or the MS and HS Teacher Community Team

1. [Dennis-Yarmouth students earn award for focus on Cape housing crisis (capecodtimes.com)](https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/education/2023/06/12/dennis-yarmouth-students-complete-housing-crisis-project/70286193007/)
2. [Yerington Teen and Family Organized Run to Remember Survivors, Victims of Indian Boarding Schools](https://www.kunr.org/local-stories/2022-08-17/ku-stevens-family-remembrance-run-survivors-victims-indian-boarding-schools)
	1. [For Ku Stevens, Running Is a ‘Profound Act’ (Nevada)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/28/sports/ku-stevens-nevada.html)
3. [All-Inclusive Playground (6th Grade) Franklin, Wisconsin](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1blh9K0-KfKEvAX_w8U21i8xVWDqAiOs4wUKXDST0ZS4/edit?pli=1#slide=id.p)
4. [Civics in Action Toolkit Student Examples](https://crfcap.org/mod/page/view.php?id=206)
5. [[Students Succeed in Making Neon the State Element (Carson City)](https://thenevadaindependent.com/article/students-succeed-in-making-neon-the-state-element)](https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/2019-legislature/teacher-students-behind-push-to-make-neon-nevadas-official-element-1604543/)
6. [Reed High Student to Present Award Winning Environmental Invention](https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/2019-legislature/teacher-students-behind-push-to-make-neon-nevadas-official-element-1604543/)
7. [High School Students Making a Difference in the Lives of Others (Forbes)](https://www.forbes.com/sites/ehrlichfu/2013/09/11/high-school-students-making-a-difference-in-the-lives-of-others/?sh=46b80f5e3fc0)
8. [Meet 16 Teens Who Are Changing the World (We Are Teachers)](https://www.weareteachers.com/15-ways-students-changing-world/)
1. Kahn, Sal and Jeffrey Rosen. Time Magazine, May 5, 2023. [Civics Education Is How We Can Repair Our Democracy | Time](https://time.com/6277350/crisis-in-civics-education-united-states/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NVACS-SS [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Lander, Jessica. *Civics in Action*, Social education 82(5), pp. 264-266, National Council for the Social Studies, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)