

These guidelines and procedures represent an effort to provide a consistent structure for national implementation of Project Citizen showcase events. We have attempted to make these guidelines and procedures as clear, concise, and useful as possible. We believe that everyone who participates in the various showcase events staged at the local, state, and national level will appreciate clearly defined guidelines and uniform procedures and criteria for rating the portfolios and simulated hearing.

1 Participation

A major objective of Project Citizen is to encourage the widest possible participation from a broad range of students in various types of settings, including classrooms and youth groups sponsored by community organizations. For the purposes of the showcase events sponsored by the Center for Civic Education's network of Project Citizen coordinators, a class generally refers to all the students enrolled in a particular class or all the members of a youth group. It is expected that the majority of students involved in the class or youth group will be in the equivalent of grades five through eight, or approximately ten to fourteen years old.

2 Showcase events

There are two types of events that comprise a showcase. Both of these events involve adult members of the community rating the students' level of achievement using the guidelines and rating instruments provided in this guide.

A Portfolio display and evaluation

This event involves adult members of the community in reading, analyzing and evaluating the portfolios produced by the students in a class or youth group. Typically, the portfolios are displayed in a prominent public venue and the rating takes place without students being present.

B Simulated hearing

This event involves all the students or youth group members who developed the portfolio. Each of the four groups of students who worked on the four sections of the portfolio are given an opportunity to make oral presentations and to respond to follow-up questions from a panel of adult community members.

SHOWCASE PROCEDURE

1 Portfolio

The portfolio consists of two major components—a four-panel display and a documentation binder.

The display consists of the following items:

- four (4) display panels of poster board, foam-core board, or the equivalent with each panel being no larger than 32 inches wide by 40 inches high; each of four portfolio groups in the class will have one panel to display their work; each panel should include
 - ▶ a written summary of the required topics
 - ▶ a variety of graphic illustrations
 - ▶ an identification of the sources used to gather information

The documentation binder consists of the following items:

- five (5) sections placed in a single three-ring binder no larger than 2 inches thick; each section should be separated by a divider and labeled on the tab
- an overall table of contents and table of contents for each section
- copies of important information each group has gathered for their section that best documents or gives evidence of their research
- a fifth section that contains the class's evaluation and reflection on their experience

2 Simulated hearing

Oral presentations by the participating students, in the form of a simulated hearing, are such an essential part of the Project Citizen learning experience that teachers are encouraged to include a simulated hearing before a panel of adult community members. These oral presentations can be made to other classes, parents, and other adults, or to community groups such as the PTA, Rotary Club, etc. This activity will provide students with valuable experience in presenting ideas to others and in convincing an audience of a position to take on a vital public policy issue. Step 5 – “Presenting Your Portfolio,” on pages 42–44 in the student book, outlines the goals and procedures for the class to use when making the oral presentations.

- In developing their portfolio and in preparing for the simulated hearing, each class, or members of a youth group, is divided into four portfolio groups, one for each section of the portfolio.

- Each of the four portfolio groups will present a prepared four-minute statement about their research on the problem they studied. Students will then respond for six minutes to follow-up questions from the panel of adult community members.
- An adult serving as a timer will indicate to students when one minute remains in the prepared testimony and again when one minute remains in the follow-up questioning.
- Students may use written notes for the four-minute prepared testimony but not for the follow-up questioning period.
- Students may refer to their portfolio display to emphasize a point at any time during either part of the oral presentation.

Timers

For each simulated hearing showcase, there should be an adult who serves as a timer. He or she should not be one of the panel members who will be rating the students' oral presentations. The timer should keep strictly to the ten-minute framework for each portfolio group presentation: four minutes for prepared testimony and six minutes for the follow-up questioning. Timers will notify the students of the time remaining by holding up a card when they have one minute left in the prepared statement time and again when there is one minute left in the follow-up questioning period. When the full ten minutes has expired, the timer will stop the presentation by indicating "Time!"

3 Selecting evaluators

The following points will be helpful as you undertake the task of selecting adult members of the community to serve as evaluators to rate the students' level of achievement on their portfolios and in the simulated hearing.

- For every three portfolios in the showcase event, there should be a panel of three adults who will rate the students' achievement.
- These panels should be made up of individuals who are knowledgeable about the policymaking process, current public policy issues, and the link between civic education and civic participation.
- Evaluators should include prominent and knowledgeable community members from both the public and private sectors. A wide variety of individuals would be qualified to serve as evaluators. Think about inviting
 - ▶ active and retired teachers
 - ▶ college professors
 - ▶ elected and appointed public officials
 - ▶ journalists

- ▶ lawyers, judges, and law enforcement personnel
- ▶ members of community organizations (League of Women Voters, Kiwanis, VFW)
- ▶ high school students who have participated in the Center's We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program

4 Materials

You will need to provide each evaluator with a copy of the Project Citizen textbook and photocopies of the following material:

- Evaluator Guidelines for the Portfolio Showcase (Appendix C)
- Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet (Appendix D)

If the students are making oral presentations, the evaluators will need the following material:

- Evaluator Guidelines for the Simulated Hearing (Appendix E)
- Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet (Appendix F)

5 Evaluation

Conduct a briefing meeting with the individuals who will serve as evaluators of the students' work. Carefully review the overall goals of Project Citizen. Pay particular attention to the nature of middle school students and the expectations that evaluators should reasonably have for them.

Review each of the following with the portfolio evaluators:

- Evaluator Guidelines for the Portfolio Showcase (Appendix C)
- Portfolio Evaluation Rating Sheet (Appendix D)

If students will be making oral presentations, review each of the following with the hearing evaluators:

- Evaluator Guidelines for the Simulated Hearing (Appendix E)
- Hearing Evaluation Rating Sheet (Appendix F)

Emphasize that evaluators need to give students some positive feedback. They should offer some constructive suggestions on how the students might improve their portfolio and their oral presentation.

As a general guideline, you will need one panel of three evaluators for every three portfolios being evaluated. Each portfolio will take approximately 45 minutes to thoroughly review and rate. Each oral presentation will take approximately one hour.

For example, if there are 15 portfolios to be evaluated, you will need at least five panels of three evaluators, 15 ratings total. Each panel of evaluators would rate three different portfolios, or rate three different oral presentations.

If possible, have each portfolio evaluated by two different panels of evaluators (six different individuals). And, if possible have two different panels hear each simulated hearing presentation.

Collect all the judges' rating sheets at the conclusion of the portfolio or hearing evaluation. To determine the level of achievement for each portfolio or simulated hearing, combine all the individual evaluators' ratings and divide by the number of individual evaluators. The result is the average rating.

This average rating will give you a number that you can use for determining different levels of achievement for the classes participating in the portfolio showcase or simulated hearing. The Center for Civic Education recommends the following rating ranges for determining the level of achievement:

Level of Achievement	Average Rating
Superior	41 – 50
Exceptional	31 – 40
Outstanding	21 – 30
Honorable Mention	0 – 20

EXAMPLE

Evaluator 1	38 total points
Evaluator 2	36 total points
Evaluator 3	40 total points
	114 total points
114 ÷ 3 = 38 [Exceptional]	

6 After the evaluations

Hold an assembly of all participants, their teachers, family, and friends. Notify them of the showcase results.

- Give each participating student a "Certificate of Achievement" with his or her name on it, signed by a school administrator or elected public official. Your Project Citizen congressional district coordinator can obtain these certificates for you from the Center for Civic Education.
- If possible, arrange for a small trophy or plaque for each class that participated showing the level of achievement attained.
- If possible, arrange for a prominent community leader to present the Certificates of Achievement and give a brief address about the importance of citizens engaging in the public policymaking process in their communities.