

Responsibilities of Citizenship



**Hudson High School
Hudson, Massachusetts**

Subject Area
Interdisciplinary Unit—
English, Social Studies

Area of Service
All areas

Grade Level
Grade 9

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In Brief

Ninth-grade students in Hudson High School’s integrated Civics-English course learn that democracy is an ongoing struggle, kept alive by an active and informed citizenry who recognize the rights of others and are empowered to affect change. Through community service-learning projects, the students discover first hand the value of civic engagement. In networking and advocating for themselves and their fellow citizens, they learn about the structure and dynamics of their community and gain concrete experience in their investigation of the abstract concepts raised by their Civics-English course.

Learner Outcomes

Students learn to:

Put a “face” on the “responsibilities” part of the course’s guiding question, “What are the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a just society?”;

Identify community needs;

Use their skills to affect change; and

Connect their local issue to a larger global issue.

MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK CONNECTIONS



This unit is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Listed are the subject areas and the learning strands addressed:

History and Social Science

History strand: 2, 3, 4, 5

Geography strand: 8

Civics and Government strand: 16, 17, 19

English Language Arts

Literature strand: 8-13, 15, 18

OVERVIEW

The Need

At Hudson High School, every freshman takes an integrated Civics-English course that engages students in actively exploring the question, “What are the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a just society?” During the first half of the year students study the structure and rationale of our democratic form of government. The second semester finds them exploring the conditions that gave rise to the Holocaust. The juxtaposition of these two themes allows students to weigh the benefits of our system of limited government and the value of freedom. At the same time, students recognize that a just society “can easily be lost, but never fully won.” Democracy, students learn, is an ongoing struggle, kept alive by an active and informed citizenry who recognize the rights of others and are empowered to affect change. The course’s community service-learning component allows students to explore their role as responsible citizens.

A CSL Response

To gain concrete experience in their investigation of the abstract concepts raised by this course, students develop service-learning projects. Early in the second semester, each student identifies a community need with which he or she feels a connection. To address the need, the student volunteers with a local agency or designs an independent service initiative. Students carry out their projects throughout the spring, reporting back to classmates, notifying the media of their work and writing a research paper in their English class that connects their local issue to a larger global issue. Finally, in June, they present their project experience to their class in a formal oral report.

Through their service projects, my students developed an understanding of the variety of communities that they are part of and at the same time developed a connection to and a stake in these communities.

Todd Wallingford,
Instructor



Students visiting with elderly patient as part of their study on aging.

Service Component

The student projects are varied, but all have clear connections to the objectives of the course work. By contacting local and state agencies and government officials in an effort to develop their projects, students discover the structure and dynamics of their community first hand. The skills they develop as they network, advocate for themselves and seek out or create opportunities to aid their fellow citizens are the skills of citizenship. Additionally, through their service work, students become aware of the depth and complexity of their community's needs and, at the same time, become empowered to take action to change the status quo. They learn through hands-on experience the value of civic engagement.

Celebration

For both students and teachers, the most powerful part of this program comes when students have finished their projects and present their accomplishments to their classmates through oral presentations and poster board displays. Students explain their projects' objectives, successes and setbacks. They discuss what they learned about their community and themselves and how they might continue their work in the future. They show their classmates pictures of themselves engaged in their work. Inevitably, students are proud of their accomplishments and share the sense of empathy and concern for others that they have experienced. Listening to their thoughtful explanations and reflections on their work is an inspiring celebration for everyone. The celebration continues when each student creates an award certificate for a fellow classmate, honoring his or her work and the change he or she has effected. Lastly, project poster boards are displayed in the library so that the rest of the school body can appreciate the efforts of the students.

Student assisting at local animal shelter.



OUTCOMES

Academic Gains

The primary academic gain involves putting a face on the “responsibilities” part of the course’s guiding question, “What are the rights and responsibilities of a citizen in a just society?” Students become aware of community needs and have learned strategies to effect change. While the students’ CSL projects relate to the work they complete in both civics and English, it is from their civics component that most of the work is generated. Connections are drawn to the curricular frameworks for History and Social Science. The CSL projects address History Strand Learning Standards 2, 3, 4 and 5, which require students to assess historical events as “warnings to us,” compose a research paper, understand the rights of individuals, and recognize limits to the pursuit of individual happiness implicit in the ideals of justice and the rights of others.

Societal Gains

The outcomes for the community are as varied as the projects themselves. An army of energetic freshmen sets out to make their community a better place, at the same time building relationships with agencies, other generations and schools.

Community Partners

The potential for community partners is virtually limitless. Although the teacher acts as facilitator, students network largely on their own. The following list of initiatives (project-based and service-based) illustrates the types of partnerships students have formed.

I tried to keep Hellenic Hill from being developed. I learned how to write persuasive letters and how to make phone calls. I learned about political activism. I know that I can make my voice heard and have the courage to stand up and change things. Most important, I learned about who I am and what I can do. It only takes one person to change the world.

Jessica St. George,
Grade 9 Student

Project-based CSL	Service-based CSL*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect used soccer equipment and donate it to an international sports charity. Investigate pet stores for animal cruelty and expose violations in newspaper editorials and letters to the MSPCA. Organize a party for the Big Brother/Big Sister program, soliciting donations from local businesses. Perform scenes from Shakespeare for elementary students. Test for toxins in river and send results to the Organization for the Assabet River. Hold can drive at Shaw’s Supermarket. Solicit donations from Larkin Lumber to build a new sign for Hudson Food Pantry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read to and write with students at an elementary school. Work with disabled children at the Michael Carter Linslow Respite Center. Volunteer at Head Start and the daycare programs at Hudson High School. Work with Park and Recreation Commission to landscape Riverside Park. Serve food at Our Father’s Table. Volunteer at Bolton Manner, a nursing home. Teach elders at the senior center how to use and fix computers. <p><small>*Service-based projects require the student to complete twenty hours of service; for project-based initiatives, students accomplish a particular task or set of goals.</small></p>

TIES TO THE MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS		
LEARNING STANDARDS/ OUTCOMES	ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT
<p>History and Social Science</p> <p>HISTORY STRAND</p> <p>Standard 3: Research, Evidence and Point of View: Students compose a research paper, using conflicting primary sources, and explain the degree to which they are able, or unable, to establish which is the more credible source.</p>	<p>Students write a research paper in which they must connect an issue that their project addresses to a larger global issue. In their research, they must use primary sources that offer conflicting explanations for the conditions that give rise to the issue on a global level and interview citizens who are affected by the problem on a local level to find out what they think are its causes.</p>	<p>Research papers must analyze the primary source in light of other primary sources, other secondary sources and students’ interviews. Presentations at the close of the project must include conclusions that they have drawn—informed by their service experience—on the causes and solutions to the issues, locally and globally. The research paper is assessed on form and content.</p>
<p>GEOGRAPHY STRAND</p> <p>Standard 8: Places and Regions of the World: Students consider historical and contemporary world events using evidence from maps, globes, and other geographical data.</p>	<p>In research papers that connect the local issue to a larger global issue, students incorporate geographical data to explain the context in which the global issue exists.</p>	<p>The research paper is assessed on both its content and form.</p>
<p>CIVICS-GOVERNMENT STRAND</p> <p>Standard 16: Authority, Responsibility, Power: Students compare and contrast ways of life under limited and unlimited government in specific times and places.</p>	<p>Students discuss the extent to which the issue that their CSL project addresses would have existed in Nazi Germany in the 1930’s; and whether they would have been able to pursue their CSL project under Hitler’s regime.</p>	<p>For homework, students write an essay that considers the degree to which they could have carried out their project in Nazi Germany, comparing it to their own experience. The essay is graded according to a rubric used for essays.</p>
<p>English and Language Arts</p> <p>COMPOSITION STRAND</p> <p>Standard 20: Select and use appropriate genres, modes of reasoning, and speaking styles when writing for different audiences and rhetorical purposes.</p>	<p>Throughout the CSL project, students focus on the different styles and forms their writing must take as they write for different audiences. Work includes a media advisory to the local press; letters to agencies with whom they will work; a letter to their parents explaining the progress they have made on their projects; and an oral presentation on their project.</p>	<p>Different rubrics are used to assess each of these assignments.</p>

LESSON PLAN Developing Project Ideas

Objective

After assessing community needs for several weeks, students will develop a proposal for a service project that they will later complete

Learning Standards

Social Studies:
History Strand, Learning Standards 4, 5
Civics and Government Strand, 19

Materials

Handouts
Newspapers
Book with lists of service ideas

Procedure

Step 1

For homework, students are asked to explore their own neighborhood and downtown and look through the newspaper, listing at least twenty-five societal needs. They must have at least two in each of the following categories: educational, intergenerational, humanitarian, environmental and legislative/political.

Step 2

In the next class, students work in groups of four to list the three most essential needs in each category and corresponding activities that help address each need. Students present their ideas to the rest of the class.

Step 3

Students have one to two weeks to complete "My CSL Project - Preliminary Proposal." They may be given time in class to browse through books that list service ideas. They should be encouraged to talk to parents, teachers and other students to develop ideas. In this proposal, students need to consider whether their project will be "service-based" or "project-based." The distinction will allow the teacher to assess projects more fairly, the former being measured by the extent to which students complete twenty hours of service and the latter by the extent to which students achieve a particular set of goals. Students give the preliminary proposal to the teacher, who evaluates how realistic and practical the projects are.

Step 4

In class, students work in pairs to complete "Making Your First Contact!" This sheet helps them prepare to make calls to set up their service project. Several students are asked to read from their script in a mock phone call to the teacher. For homework, students make their calls and complete "My CSL Project - Final Proposal." The final proposal should have project goals carefully defined, as their project will be graded based upon these expectations.

Name _____

Due: _____

My CSL Project Preliminary Proposal

1. What will your project be called?
2. With whom will you work on this project?
3. Who have you contacted about your project? How and when did you speak to them? (in person/on the phone) What did you find out from them?

Who	How/When	What I Found Out
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4. Who do you still need to contact? When will you do this?
What do you need to find out?

Who	When	What I Need to Find Out
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5. In what type of service will you be engaged? (humanitarian, environmental, political-legislative action, educational, intergenerational or a combination of these)
6. Will your CSL be "project" or "service" based? Explain.
7. What is the larger global issue to which you will connect your project for the paper in English class?
8. Do you expect to need any funding to help you carry out your project? If so, how much and what for?
9. Describe the project in as much detail as possible on the back of this sheet.

LESSON PLAN Examine the Complexity of Civic Society

Objective

Students will recognize the essential complexity of the network of civic organizations in a democratic, civic society in comparison with the structure of a dictatorship.

Learning Standards

Social Studies
Civics and Government Strand 17

Materials

Large Paper
Markers

Procedure

Step 1

Having studied the structure of national, state and local governments, students draw diagrams that display the structure of these systems. The class is divided into three groups, each drawing a large diagram of one of these levels of government and then placing it on a wall.

Step 2

Students gather in groups of four and list the contacts they have made in setting up their service projects as well as any other local agencies they know about. Next, they write each agency and its function on a separate piece of paper. Then, one by one, students approach the diagrams on the wall, laying agency names over the diagrams, in a manner that indicates the relationship the agency has with the government. The teacher asks, "What does the agency do that government can not or will not? Why is the agency's work necessary? What relationship does the agency have with the government? How do agencies and government support each other?"

Step 3

Students are each given a diagram that depicts the top-down organization of government in Nazi Germany. They then generate a list of organizations in Germany in the 1930's, considering the control that the government exerted over them.

TIMELINE

January

Brainstorm project ideas

February

Contact local agencies to set up project. Define project and hand in "My CSL Project - Final Proposal."

March

Start project and journal. Issue media advisory.

April

Continue project and journal. Start CSL-Related English Research Paper. Write Civics Third Term Letter.

May

Finish project and journal. Hand in research paper.

June

Complete "Your Service-Learning Essay." Present project to class. Display project poster boards before the school. Complete "CSL Networking Sheet."

Assessment

Two of my students measured the width of potholes and counted cars to prove that Central Street is a busy road indeed deserving a new coat of tar. They compiled their statistics and presented their findings to the head of the DPW, learning a whole lot about town government and how to lobby town officials—a good lesson in civic participation, clearly furthering my objectives as their Civics teacher.

Todd Wallingford,
Instructor

Students are assessed on four major aspects of their project: the service, their journal, their project presentation, and an essay that requires them to connect their service experience to their study of the Holocaust. Rubrics are provided for all components so that students know what they need to do to achieve the grade they desire.

Students reflect upon their work in various ways throughout the course of their service project. At least once every other week, class discussions involve students’ comparing and contrasting their experiences. Students also share the reflections they have made in their journals (writing guided by prompting questions). Additionally, in a media advisory that students issue to the local press, they must communicate the significance of their work in order to attract a reporter’s attention. At the end of the third term—half way through their project—students write a letter to their parents that explains the progress they have made and what they have left to do to complete their project. After completing their service, students present their project to their classmates, reflecting upon how they benefited, what the community gained, what they found most challenging and in what ways their sense of obligation has been affected by their work. Finally, they write an essay in which they tie their service work to the course work by considering the extent to which they would have been capable or willing to perform their service project in Nazi Germany and why their service is necessary to help maintain a just society. To help the following year’s class, students also fill out a “Networking Sheet” offering ideas and contacts for service projects.

CONNECTING TO MCAS: OPEN RESPONSE QUESTION



Compare / Contrast

To what extent would your service learning project have been encouraged or discouraged in Nazi Germany? Explain.

Discuss the role that two individuals in the following categories have played in identifying needs, taking risks and affecting change in society.

1. One of your classmates.
2. Any individual you view as a rescuer in Nazi Germany.

Challenges

Managing the vast array of projects that students develop can be difficult.

Defining the scope of the project at the outset involves some guesswork but is essential. Students may struggle to find a project they really like.

Students may “get bored” with keeping track of their learning in their journals.

Grading the projects can be difficult.

Students need access to phones.

Solutions

Have students keep a log of their work, updating it every time they work. Meet with students every other week during class to review their progress and help them set goals.

Students must define whether their projects are service- or project-based. “Service-based” projects require 20 hours of service while “project-based” projects require the completion of some goal (e.g. collecting 300 cans of food for a food drive). Be sure that the goals for these projects are not too ambitious or too limited.

Students must be excited about their project. Most often, students look forward to the opportunity to earn grades for doing something other than “bookwork,” but they must choose a project for which they feel some passion or at least a connection. Spending time at the start planning good projects makes the experience enjoyable for students and teachers.

Have students focus on specific questions that are related to the curriculum rather than questions that are too big and general. On the other hand, students could reflect on their work in ways other than journal writing.

It is important that expectations are defined clearly from the start in the “Final Project Proposal” because it is the fulfillment of these expectations upon which students are graded. Also, students must be meticulous in keeping their logs because their entries will serve as “proof” that they have fulfilled their goals. In certain cases, teachers may have to contact agencies with which students worked to verify the documentation in the logs.

Often, students need to make calls to contact community partners during school hours. Securing access to a phone in a quiet place during school for students is very helpful.



Extending the Vision

While these projects are integrated into a Civics/English course that uses the *Facing History and Ourselves* curriculum, student-generated CSL projects could serve as a foundation for any civics course. At Hudson High, we plan to integrate more computer technology into the program in the future. Students will be asked to e-mail their media advisories, create newsletters to inform the public about the issue that they are addressing, and create a Power Point presentation for their project rather than a poster board display.

IN CONCLUSION: School's Role in the Community

Now in its third year, this program is gaining momentum and becoming more solidly integrated into our curriculum. Because the eighth grade is housed in the same building, many students now enter the ninth grade with an idea of what they plan to do for a service project. They have read articles about the projects in the local paper, seen projects displayed in the library and learned from brothers and sisters about the projects. By and large, civics students have enjoyed their projects, many saying that it was the best part of the course.

Consistent communication with parents is key to the success of this program. Parents have been overwhelmingly supportive of the goal of teaching students the value of civic engagement. However, it is necessary to explain to them how the projects tie into the curriculum, to reinforce their value as a teaching methodology. Because the students are expected to set up and complete the projects largely on their own, many will seek help from their parents. Letters home that explain expectations and progress help to ensure continued parental support.

Local agencies and town officials have been remarkably supportive in helping students find or create service opportunities. During the first year of the project, students found that many adults did not quite believe that students would be willing to help out "for free." Now, many teachers and officials approach civics teachers with ideas or requests for volunteers. For instance, the high school's TV-Media teacher distributed copies of the CSL media advisories to his students, asking them to choose a project to feature in a public service announcement. The student-produced spots aired on local cable television.

At the end of their project, students fill out a "Networking Sheet" that helps the following year's students consider ideas and contacts for service-learning projects. Civics students have established unexpected and positive ties throughout the community.



Student visiting with nursing home resident