

High School Seal of Civic Readiness Capstone Project

What is the Civic Readiness Capstone Project?

The Civic Readiness Capstone Project is a major project completed in high school that demonstrates your civic knowledge, skills, and mindset. It asks you to identify a civic issue that affects you, your school, or your community, and then research, analyze, and take action to address it.

This project is hands-on, meaningful, and student-driven. It gives you the chance to bring together what you've learned in many classes while showing how you can think critically, solve problems, work with others, and make a difference in your community.

By completing the Capstone, you'll demonstrate growth in:

- Civic knowledge – what you know about civic issues, communities, and government
- Civic skills and actions – what you can do to research, evaluate, and act on issues
- Civic mindset – how you see your role and responsibility as a member of your community

Project Steps (summarized from the guidance provided by NYSED)

Step 1: Identify a Civic Issue

- Examine your school or community to find a civic issue that matters.
- Use tools like asset mapping, community walks, surveys, or interviews to learn more.
- Be open to multiple perspectives, including those from different cultural groups.
- Submit a topic proposal explaining why this issue is important.

Step 2: Research and Analyze the Issue

- Learn about past attempts to address the issue.
- Use multiple sources: news, social media, data, government reports, and interviews.
- Evaluate sources for accuracy, bias, and credibility.
- Consider the number and types of people affected, the geographic and environmental impact, and the connections between people and places.

Step 3: Identify the Cause of the Issue

- Frame questions and form hypotheses about why the issue exists.
- Use evidence from different disciplines (political science, history, economics, sociology, geography, natural sciences).
- Consider alternative explanations and viewpoints.

Step 4: Generate Possible Solutions

- Brainstorm multiple solutions to address the issue.
- Connect your solutions to the role of government or community organizations.
- Reflect on how different cultural values and perspectives shape how people understand the problem and possible responses.

Step 5: Evaluate Solutions

- Weigh the feasibility of different solutions with a cost-benefit analysis.
- Consider the perspectives of different stakeholders and cultural groups.

- Discuss potential positive and negative outcomes, and how negative impacts could be reduced.

Step 6: Develop a Plan of Action

Your action plan should include:

- A description of your recommended solution
- The level/unit of government or community body your solution connects to
- A cost-benefit analysis of the plan
- Who will be affected and how
- An evaluation of the plan from at least three stakeholder groups and two cultural groups
- A plan for how, where, and when the action will take place
- A strategy for how you will communicate about your issue and persuade others (speaking, writing, media, etc.)

Step 7: Take Informed Action

- Put your plan into action in your school or community.
- Engage others respectfully through discussion, debate, persuasion, and collaboration.
- Collect artifacts (photos, recordings, flyers, meeting notes, social media posts, etc.) to document your work.

Step 8: Reflect on the Process

- Write a reflection that explains what you learned from the project:
 - Knowledge and skills you gained
 - Challenges you faced and how you addressed them
 - Successes and impact of your project
 - How this experience shapes your future civic engagement
- Include artifacts that document your work and learning.

Step 9: Presentation

- Present your Civic Readiness Capstone Project to the School Civic Readiness Committee (or an assigned panel).
- Share your civic issue, your research, the solutions you considered, the action you took, and what you learned.
- Use visuals, media, or creative formats to strengthen your presentation.
- Be prepared to answer questions.

At this time, this project is completed through Senior level English and Social Students course work as a final examination grade. Those seeking the Seal of Civic Readiness must complete step 7: Take Action to earn the Seal.