Clarkstown Central School District

Seal of Civic Readiness Handbook
2026-2027

Introduction

"Civic readiness is the ability to make a positive difference in the public life of our communities through the combination of civic knowledge, skills and actions, mindsets, and experiences." http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/civic-readiness-initiative

The intent of the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness is to encourage the study of civics and civility through experiential learning; certify attainment of civic readiness; provide employers with a method of identifying high school graduates with skills in civics and civility; provide universities with an additional method to recognize applicants seeking admission; prepare students with twenty-first century skills; recognize the value of K-12 Social Studies education in schools as a means to build civic knowledge; empower students as agents of positive social change and strengthen our diverse democracy. (http://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/seal-civic-readiness) The Seal of Civic Readiness can also be used as a 4+1 pathway to meet New York State diploma requirements.

Clarkstown Central School District is pleased to announce participation in the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness program. Students can earn the required six points for the Seal of Civic Readiness in a variety of ways. Students can earn points for passing and/or achieving mastery on Social Studies Regents exams, taking advanced level Social Studies courses, and completing Seal of Civic Readiness projects that are part of Social Studies classes. Students can also earn points by submitting a required reflection assignment after successful completion of certain elective courses, extracurricular activities, or work experiences that encourage civic mindsets and actions. Students can also complete point-bearing civics projects on their own under faculty advisement.

Students who earn the Seal of Civic Readiness will have a seal affixed to their diploma, which they will receive at graduation. In addition, students who complete the requirements for earning the NYSSCR will have the designation listed on their official transcripts.

The Seal of Civic Readiness Committee

The Clarkstown Central School District created a Seal of Civic Readiness Committee to implement the Seal of Civic Readiness program. The composition of the committee fulfills the requirements set forth by the New York State Education Department. The following are committee members and their designations:

Dr. Julie Snider, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Aaron McCasland, Director of Learning Pathways
Candace Reim, Principal, Clarkstown High School North
Debra Tarantino, Principal of Clarkstown High School South
Michael Stoll, Assistant Principal, Clarkstown High School North
TBD, Assistant Principal, Clarkstown High School South
Melina Flugger, Social Studies Teacher/Department Chair/IB Coordinator, Clarkstown High School South
Jaime Maire, Social Studies Teacher/Department Chair, Clarkstown High School North

Paul Lepore, Social Studies Teacher/Department Chair, Felix Festa Middle School
Stacie Bolin, School Counselor/Department Co-Chair, Clarkstown High School North
Dana Rose, School Counselor/Department Co-Chair, Clarkstown High School North
Carolyn McKenna, School Counselor/Department Chair, Clarkstown High School South
Matt Backs, School Counselor, Birchwood School
Kathleen Dowling, Social Studies Teacher/Civic Readiness Advisor, Clarkstown High School North
Scott Barsamian, Social Studies Teacher/Civic Readiness Advisor, Clarkstown High School South

Student Recruitment

All students will learn more about the Seal of Civic Readiness in their Social Studies classes and from school counselors. Students and parents will receive written communication from the Clarkstown Central School District.

The SCR Committee will decide on methods for communicating the NYSSCR program to its students, parents, faculty, and community, including informational meetings, parent letters, newsletters, school website, workshops, assemblies, and local media coverage. Information presented would contain background information on the NYSSCR, the Clarkstown Central School District Seal of Civic Readiness contact information, the student application process, the advisement process, and proficiency criteria.

Timeline

- **September/October 2026:** Attend the informational meeting at your school. You will then be invited to the Seal of Civic Readiness Google Classroom.

- **December 2026:** Submit all reflections for previous elective courses and extracurriculars taken during high school prior to senior year on Google Classroom. You must have accumulated a total of 40 hours for extracurriculars.

- **April 2027:** Submit all remaining components and reflections on Google Classroom. If student presentations are part of how students will earn their Civic Participation points, the Seal of Civic Readiness Committee will schedule these presentations with students.

- **May 2027:** Seal of Civic Readiness Committee will review components and will notify students of their status.

- **May/June 2027:** Advisors will share with Central Office the students who have completed all requirements to earn their seal.

Student Requirements

To earn the Seal of Civic Readiness, a student must accumulate six points according to the chart below: at least two points from Column 1 (Civic Knowledge), two points from Column 2 (Civic Participation), and two additional points from either column. This chart provides flexibility and is not a checklist, as students do not need points in every category to qualify.

Civic Knowledge	Points	Civic Participation	Points
1a. 4 credits of social studies, required for graduation (Global I, Global II, US History, PIG/Econ - or equivalents)	1	**2a. High School Civics Project** Complete a project that demonstrates civic knowledge, skills, actions and mindsets, as established by CCSD Seal of Civic Readiness Committee	1.5**
1b. Mastery level on Social Studies Regents Exam (Receive 85 or higher on Global &/or US History Regents - or exemption w/ course grade 85+)	1.5*	**Service-Learning Project** (minimum 25 hours) and reflective civic learning essay/presentation/product	1*
1c. Proficiency level on Social Studies Regents Exam (Receive passing score on Global &/or US History Regents)	1*	**Earned credit in an elective course** that promotes civic engagement** & reflective civic learning essay/presentation/product	.5*
1d. Advanced social studies course(s)	.5*	**Extra-curricular participation or work-based learning experience that promotes civic engagement or action** (minimum 40 hours) and a reflective civic learning essay/presentation/product	.5*
1e. Social Studies Research Project that demonstrates civic knowledge	1	**High School Capstone Project**	4

***Students may receive these points more than once.**
****Students may receive these points no more than two times.**

The SCR Committee will track students' Civic Knowledge points based on their Social Studies course credits and Social Studies Regents Exam scores. To earn points for a Research Project or any of the Civic Participation activities, students will submit their work and any corresponding verification of fulfillment of the activity's requirements.

Special Education Students

Special Education students are eligible to receive the Seal of Civic Readiness. All accommodations listed on the Special Education student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), including assessment and classroom accommodations, are applicable as they proceed to meet the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness requirements. Students who have received an exemption on a Social Studies Regents Exam will receive points for passing a Social Studies Regents exam towards earning the Seal.

Requirements for Civics Projects & Activities

Social Studies Research Project - 1 point (Civic Knowledge)

Students may demonstrate civic knowledge by completing a research project approved by the Seal of Civic Readiness Committee.

- This can be a short-term project that may be connected to a classroom project or an extra-curricular organization.
- Students may use an inquiry for a research project (See 12th grade Government Inquiries from the NYSED Social Studies Tool Kit.
- Evaluation will be based on performance indicators represented on the SCR Research Project Rubric and incorporate the components of Social Studies Practice A: Gathering, interpreting and using evidence.

High School Civic Project - 1.5 points (Civic Participation) - Completed in Public Policy or Social Studies 12 course

A High School Civic Project is a short-term project completed either as part of or separate from a class that demonstrates civic knowledge, skills, actions and mindsets. Students may receive these points as much as twice.

In a High School Civic Project, students will:

- Focus on a civic issue (problem) that can be interpreted in a variety of ways by a broad array of citizens holding various viewpoints.
- Analyze data to determine the impact of the issue on the community and evaluate possible solutions to address the problem.
- Recommend strategies to address the problem.
- Communicate recommended strategies using written, audio/visual, and/or oral presentation.
- Reflect on what they have learned about their role in the civic life of their community.

Criteria for Success:
Evaluation will be based on performance indicators represented on the SCR Civic Project Rubric and include an evaluation of selected students' Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills and Actions listed in the Civic Readiness Domains and their ability to:

- gather, interpret and use evidence, including evaluating sources used for bias and credibility.
- make their own judgments and policy recommendations based on sound reasoning and evidence.
- communicate their position persuasively, using an appropriate format for the assignment.
- reflect on how the project has impacted their civic knowledge, skills, actions, and/or mindset.

Public Policy Course Review and Reflection
High School Civic Project
High School Civic Project Piece #1
High School Civic Project Piece #2

Service Learning Project - 1 point (Civic Participation)

- Complete a minimum of 25 hours of demonstrated service to the community
- Write and submit a reflective essay/presentation
- Students may receive these points more than once.

Service learning is an inquiry-based approach that combines service to community with learning objectives. Service learning is generally described in five stages:

1. Investigation - conduct research on a community-based problem or needs
2. Preparation - create a plan to address these needs
3. Action - direct service or indirect service (e.g. advocacy)
4. Reflection - required to earn the point for the Diploma Seal
5. Demonstration/celebration

The most meaningful service-learning projects are personally relevant to students and their interests. Students can complete service learning projects individually, or with a small group or as part of a larger group. Service-learning projects may be completed in school as part of a class or with a school organization such as World of Difference. Projects may also be completed with organizations outside of the school district with SCR Committee approval, religious organizations, Rotary Club, etc.

Reflective essay/presentation:
Students are required to submit a reflective essay/presentation that describes the impact of the service learning. Reflection activities can be incorporated before, during, and after the service experience. Reflection activities completed prior to service can focus on anticipating what the service experience will be like and what assumptions students are bringing into the situation. Reflection that occurs during and after the service experience can focus on students' experiences and outcomes.

The reflective essay/presentation assignment should address at least one question from each of the three categories below:

Issue-focused questions:

- Why is there a need for your service?
- What do you perceive as the underlying issue, and why does it exist?

- What social, economic, political, and educational systems are maintaining and perpetuating the situation?
- What can you do with the knowledge you gained from this experience to promote change?

Client-focused reflection questions:
- What similarities do you perceive between you and the people you are serving?
- How are you perceived by the people you are serving?
- What do you think a typical day is like for the people you serve? What pressures do they confront?

Self-focused reflection questions:
- What personal qualities (e.g. leadership, communication skills, empathy etc.) have you developed through service-learning?
- What contribution can you make to public understanding of this issue based on your service-learning experience?
- In what ways are you finding your involvement with service challenging? What have you found that is helping you follow through despite the challenges you encounter?

Evaluation Criteria:
Evaluation criteria will be based on performance indicators represented on the SCR Service Learning Project Rubric, Log, and Reflection and include an evaluation of students' Civic Knowledge, Civic Skills and Actions, Civic Mindset and Experiences listed in the Civic Readiness Domains.

Credit in an elective course that promotes civic engagement - 0.5 points (Civic Participation)

- Pass a qualifying elective course.
    - Eligible electives include: Student Leadership Assets (S), Work-Based Learning (N), English 12 WISE, Environmental Impact, College Child Development (N), Model UN, Model Congress (N), Facing History & Ourselves (S), SUPA/STAC Public Policy, College Sociology, and more with Seal of Civic Readiness Committee approval.
- Submit an application of knowledge essay/presentation (see review and reflection).
- Students may receive these points more than once.

Application of Knowledge Essay/Presentation: Guiding Questions and Criteria for Success
The purpose of the application of knowledge essay/presentation/product is to provide students the opportunity to communicate the ways in which various experiences, elective courses, and activities have impacted their civic knowledge, skills and mindsets. The following are guiding questions and criteria for success to guide the development of students' application of knowledge products. Application of knowledge products should include three main elements aligned with the domains of civic readiness that address the questions and criteria below:

- **Civic Experiences: What Did You Do?**
    - Describe the course or activity you participated in. Include:
        - The context/setting
        - Your role
        - The purpose of the course/activity/experience

        - Key ideas presented in the course/activity/experience
- **Civic Knowledge: What Civic Knowledge Did You Gain?**
    - Explain and provide examples of how the course or experience increased your civic knowledge. Elements of civic knowledge you may wish describe may include but are not limited to:
        - The structure and functioning of government, law, and democracy at the federal, state, local, and school levels, and how to participate therein
        - Civil and educational rights and responsibilities guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, the Constitution of the State of New York, and federal, state and local statutes and regulations
        - History, geography, economics, and current events within our country and in our global society
        - The impact of individual and collective histories in shaping contemporary issues
        - View and analyze history and current issues from multiple perspectives
        - The importance of civic rights and responsibilities, such as voting, volunteering, serving on a jury, and the importance of ensuring a free press
- **Civic Skills, Actions and Mindsets: How Did This Experience Change You?**
    - Explain and provide examples of the impact this course/activity/experience had on you and your civic-related skills and mindset. Elements of civic skills, actions and mindsets you may wish to explain may include but are not limited to:
        - **Civic Skills and Actions**
            - Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates, and how to respectfully disagree with other viewpoints and provide evidence for a counterargument
            - Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, community, state or national issue or problem
            - Identify, describe and contrast the roles of the individual in opportunities for social and political participation in different societies
            - Work to influence those in positions of power to achieve extensions of freedom, social justice, and human rights
            - Fulfill social and political responsibilities associated with participation in a democratic society and the interdependent global community by developing awareness of and/or engaging in the political process
            - Analyze and evaluate news (news literacy), media, social media and other sources of information for accuracy, bias, reliability, and credibility.
            - Engagement in working toward the public good
        - **Civic Mindsets:**
            - Valuing equity, inclusivity, diversity, and fairness
            - Recognizing the need to plan for both current needs and the good of future generations
            - Empathy, compassion, and respect for the views of people with other opinions and perspectives
            - Committing to balancing the common good with individual liberties;
            - Demonstrating a sense of self as an active participant in society, willing to contribute to solving local and/or national problems
            - Respecting fundamental democratic principles, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the rule of law.

Extra-curricular or work-based experience that promotes civic engagement or action - 0.5 points (Civic Participation)

- Minimum of 40 hours, may be cumulative across multiple high school years.
- Write an application of knowledge essay/presentation (see log, evaluation form, and reflection)
- Students may receive these points more than once.

This component was designed to be flexible to recognize how clubs and responsibilities outside of school can shape a student's civic engagement. This includes working after school, externship with required components, participating in Mock Trial, Model UN, or taking a leadership position in any extra-curricular organization. Students will submit a description of the activity to the SCR Committee to confirm the activity qualifies for Civic Participation credit.

High School Capstone Project - 4 points (Civic Participation) - Eagle Scout or Gold Award projects may apply

What is a Civic Readiness Capstone Project?
A Civic Readiness Capstone Project is a culminating, experiential, summative project assessing a student's Civic Knowledge, Skills & Actions, and Civic Mindset that is:

- Social Studies Standards-based
- Authentic, hands-on, and includes real-world investigation and application

The Capstone Project includes these Essential Elements:

- Identify an issue (local, state, national, or global)
- Apply civic knowledge, skills, actions, and mindsets to the issue
- Engage in a civic experience based on the issue to influence positive change to the community (local, state, national, or global)
- Present overall project to the school's Seal of Civic Readiness Committee

In a Civic Readiness Capstone project, students will:

- Identify a civic issue (problem) facing them, their school, or their community
- Analyze a civic issue (problem), evaluate alternative solutions, design and/or execute a solution for this problem.
- Take informed action to address the civic issue.
- Reflect on what they have learned about their school or community from the Capstone project.
- Make a presentation about their Civic Readiness Capstone project.

When would students complete a Civic Readiness Capstone Project?

- The Civic Readiness Capstone Project may be embedded as a part of students 12th grade Social Studies coursework, particularly Participation in Government. 12th graders may also complete the Capstone Project separate from any course with the advisement of an agreed-upon Social Studies teacher or SCR Committee member to monitor their progress, provide feedback and help with the submission requirements.

- Whether students work on the Capstone individually or in groups, individual students will need to meet the performance indicators represented on the SCR Capstone Project Rubric, aligned with the Essential Elements above.

Essential Elements of New York Civic Readiness Capstone Projects

Participation in government and in our communities is fundamental to the success of American democracy[1]. Students choose to complete the Civic Readiness Capstone project to demonstrate their readiness to make a positive difference in the public life of their communities through the applied combination of civic knowledge, skills and actions, mindset, and experiences. Through this project, students will apply knowledge and skills they have learned through their P-12 Social Studies education, as well as other subject areas.

High School Capstone Projects completed for the Civic Readiness Diploma Seal include these essential elements based on the Definition of Civic Readiness:

Essential Elements	Civic Knowledge	Civic Skills	Civic Mindset
Examine Community	Demonstrate an understanding of the structure and function of government and democracy at the appropriate level, and how to participate therein. Identify, describe, and evaluate the relationships between people, places, regions, and environments by using geographic tools to place them in a spatial context. ● *For example, students can conduct community walks/drives and asset map their community.*	Define and frame questions about events and the world in which we live, form hypotheses as potential answers to these questions, use evidence to answer these questions, and consider and analyze counter-hypotheses.	Identify opportunities for and the role of the individual in social and political participation in the school, local, and/or state community.
Identify Issues	Integrate alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas. Describe the impact of individual and collective histories in shaping contemporary issues.	Analyze a civic issue (problem) in the community ● *For example, include data to describe the number of people affected by the issue, the age/gender/socio-economic status of the people affected by the issue, the geographic impact of the issue, the environmental impact of the issue, etc.* Integrate evidence from multiple disciplines into Capstone Project.	Reflect on how different cultures have values, norms and beliefs that shape how they understand their communities and the problems they face.
Conduct Research	Describe how the issue affects the daily lives and shapes the perspectives of similar and different stakeholder groups.	Analyze and evaluate news, media, social media and other sources of information for accuracy, bias, reliability, and credibility.	

[1] Grade 12: Participation in Government and Civics, NYSED Social Studies Practices, 2014, page 45

	● *For example, conducting interviews and administering surveys will help students understand the issue from different perspectives, including diverse cultural groups.*		
Analysis	Analyze a civic issue (problem) in the community, describe past attempts to address the issue, generate and evaluate alternative solutions to a civic problem.	Weigh appropriate evidence from multiple disciplines to support claims, which may include political science, history, natural sciences, economics, geography, and sociology.	Reflect on how personal attitudes and beliefs are different and the same from those of other cultures and communities. Integrate what can be learned through engagement with diversity into the Capstone Project.
Develop Strategies and Solutions	Design and/or execute a solution for this problem.	Evaluate the feasibility of proposed actions to address the community or civic issue. ● *For example, determine an appropriate course of action; deconstruct and construct plausible and persuasive arguments using evidence.*	Analyze factors that influenced the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the civic issue central to the Capstone Project. Integrate alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas.
Take Informed Action		Design and implement a Capstone Project that engages the school and/or out-of-school community. ● *For example, determine an appropriate course of action; work to influence those in positions of power to strive for extensions of freedom, social justice, and human rights; develop an awareness of and/or engage in the political process.*	
Communicate		Communicate in a civic context, showing the ability to express ideas, discuss, persuade, debate, negotiate, build consensus and compromise to organize and conduct civic action. Strategically use different forms of communication to persuade/advocate and express ideas.	

		Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and debates; respectfully disagree with other viewpoints.	
Reflection			Analyze Capstone Project experience, reflecting on the process that was implemented, challenges faced, project limitations, successes, future civic actions and transferable skills. Demonstrate and reflect on a sense of self as an active participant in society, willing to contribute to solving local and/or national problems.

Based on the New York State Social Studies Practices, Grades 9-12, the New York State Performance Level Descriptors for the Global History & Geography II and the U.S. History & Government Regents exam, the NYSED Definition of Civic Readiness, and the American Association of Colleges and University VALUE Rubric for Civic Engagement.

Relevant Definitions:

1. Asset map: Asset Mapping is a tool that relies on a core belief of asset-based community development; namely, that good things exist in communities and that those things can be highlighted and encouraged — these are assets suited to advancing those communities. There are six categories of community assets: physical, economic, stories, local residents, local associations, local institutions.
2. Communication methods include in-person/face-to-face, print, digital (i.e., social media)
3. Perspective(s) - outlook, point of view, position on or towards an issue
4. Stakeholder - a member of a particular status group that holds a specific self-interest in regard to a particular social problem or public policy

References:

- NYSED Civic Readiness Handbook
- NYSED Seal of Civic Readiness