

The Seamless Web: Minnesota's New Education System

5 The Citizenship Package

Pages 2, 3, 6 and 12 of this performance package are included at the end of this chapter. At first glance, we might be tempted to think that this package is genuinely academic and that it deals with a worthwhile subject. Unfortunately, a closer look at the package reveals something quite different.

The performance package requires, as stated on page 2, that students will develop a "Policy Action Plan for influencing the development of policy on an issue." The package then gives this Task Description:

Work in a group to prepare and present a Policy Action Plan to influence government decision-making regarding a particular issue. In the Plan, identify a goal and outline strategies based on various ways that interest groups exert power to influence government policy. [Emphasis added.]

Is this what citizenship is all about? A study of interest groups? What happened to political parties? What happened to candidates? What happened to platforms? What happened to our state and federal Constitutions? What happened to elections? Why aren't our students directed to study the real nature of citizenship? This package is called "Citizens Guide." Why, then, doesn't it study what citizenship is actually all about?

To define citizenship down to interest groups does not begin to do justice to genuine civic responsibility. Why force our students to become involved in interest groups as opposed to the much bigger avenues of civic responsibility? The reason is because there is a remarkable similarity between interest groups and diversity training groups. In many cases, the groups are the same. For that reason, this study of interest groups becomes little more than diversity training once again. Diversity is the core curriculum of the revolution in education. We find it tucked away in all sorts of places.

On page 12 of the citizenship package, the instructions then claim to become academic. The package at this point, for example, says that students should know the "principles of democracy." These principles are listed as follows:

- Popular sovereignty
- Federalism
- Separation of powers
- Checks and balances
- Limited government
- Judicial review

Is this an adequate list of the "principles of democracy"? The Declaration of Independence was written and signed by the American patriots who actually formed our democracy. Should we suppose that they knew what the principles of our democracy really are? Let's look at what they said about these principles. In the carefully worded, unanimously agreed to, Declaration of Independence, they said:

The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent

respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which compel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed....

What are the fundamental rights of our democracy? As described by the people who created it, they are:

1. Government is based on natural law ("Laws of Nature and of Nature's God").
2. Truth is accessible to all (self-evident truths).
3. All people are equal before the law.
4. Human rights are inherent because they are God-given. They include the
5. Right to life,
6. Right of liberty, and
7. Right of happiness (private property).
8. Protecting the God-given rights is the purpose of government.
9. Government receives its just powers from the consent of the governed.

Now compare what the performance package says are the principles of our democracy to what the founders of our nation say the basic principles are. Notice that there is no similarity at all until we get to the ninth principle.

Why is there such a total disconnect? Why doesn't the performance package on citizenship teach our children what the most basic principles of our nation really are? *The reason is because the revolution in education seeks to undermine every one of these nine principles. Go down the list. Every precept is denied by the Profile of Learning and is replaced with a position which is hostile to freedom.*

Should we be surprised? The Declaration of Independence was written to give us freedom. The revolution in education exists to control us. *That is why the revolution in education is the greatest threat to our freedom since our nation began over 200 years ago.*

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 1 A Citizen's Guide

Content Standard: People and Cultures: U. S. Citizenship

Level: High School

Specific Statement(s) from the Standard:

What students should know:

2. Know the rights and responsibilities of United States citizens and non-citizens
3. Understand the formal and informal structures within which interest groups exercise power

Product(s):

- Policy Action Plan for influencing the development of policy on an issue
- Oral presentation of the Plan to the class

Task Description:

Work in a group to prepare and present a Policy Action Plan to influence government decision-making regarding a particular issue. In the Plan, identify a goal and outline strategies based on the various ways that interest groups exert power to influence government policy .

Your group will need to make decisions about how to assign individual responsibilities for the work. However, each group member must be knowledgeable about the entire Plan, provide specific information, and answer questions during a class presentation.

In developing the Plan you should:

1. Clearly state the issue.
(Example: to support [or advocate against] a proposal for additional taxes for a baseball stadium.)
2. State the specific goals of the Plan to influence policy on the issue, including:
 - purpose and intentions (rationale)
 - impact that the desired outcome (new or amended policy) will have on particular affected groups and on the general population.

(Some examples: to ensure a Yes for No] vote at the polls; to explain the impact of professional sports in the community; to explain the role of taxpayers in supporting [or rejecting] the proposal.)

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 1 A Citizen's Guide

Task Description, continued

3. Identify the interest groups that advise on policy and the groups that make decisions on the issue. For each group, you need to find out:
 - its mission, function, and authority
 - its political positions and affiliations
 - its size and membership structure
 - the process for making decisions
 - the process for hearing citizen input
 - how the group interacts with other policy groups, advisory groups, and agencies -- both formally and informally.
 4. Develop a strategy for influencing policy decisions on the issue.
 - A. First, find information on:
 - previous and/or current action regarding the issue
 - strategies that have been effective in the past for similar issues and goals.
 - B. Then:
 - provide a step-by-step description of at least two strategies for influencing policy. Describe established, formal procedures such as making a presentation at a council meeting, submitting a signed petition, or organizing a campaign. You must also describe other, less formally structured and established strategies such as using friendships, exploiting business or social relationships and group affiliations to exercise power
 - include details such as people, times and dates, locations, problems or questions, needs for and ways to access resources
 - discuss the feasibility, legality, and ethics of the proposed strategy.
- (Some examples: involving all interested stakeholders [baseball fans, business community, owners of the team, taxpayers]; building close relationships with fans and/or taxpayers]; improving communication on the issue.)
5. Prepare to answer questions from your teacher and classmates about the issue and the strategies you have proposed.
 6. Present the Policy Action Plan to the class.
 7. Answer questions from the teacher and classmates emphasizing the following in your responses:
 - the rights and responsibilities of citizens (and non-citizens if applicable)
 - the ways that interest groups exercise influence over government policy.

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 2 A Citizen's Guide

Content Standard: People and Cultures: U. S. Citizenship

Level: High School

Specific Statement(s) from the Standard:

What students should do:

2. Analyze how citizens can affect public policy
3. Observe, analyze and interact with an actual or simulated governmental process

Product(s):

- Completed Observation and Analysis Form

Task Description:

Observe two meetings of a group that advises or sets government policy and answer the questions below. Your responses to the questions should explain the workings of the governmental process as well as the group's impact on public policy.

Your teacher will either consult with you on making arrangements for in-person observations or provide for in-class viewings of the proceedings (through, for example, live television or videotapes).

Observation and Analysis Questions

Explain all answers fully, providing specific examples and details to support assertions.

1. Identify the group being observed:
 - Who are the people in the group?
 - How is the group structured?
 - What is the function and authority of the group?
 - Who does the group represent?
 - How is that representation apparent?
2. Describe the proceedings:
 - What issues are discussed?
 - Whose interests are most directly at stake in the particular issues addressed? How do you know?
 - How is the meeting conducted?
 - How are decisions made?
 - What perspectives, opinions, or biases are evident? What is the evidence?

PERFORMANCE PACKAGE TASK 3
A Citizen's Guide

Special Notes, continued

The questions that you ask should allow students to demonstrate understanding of the structures of government, how policy is influenced and determined, the role of citizens in the governing process, and an understanding of the issue presented in the Guide.

Use tests to assess students' knowledge of the following "Know" parts of the standard

1. *Understand how the U. S. government, as established by the Constitution, embodies the principles and ideals of a democratic republic*

Concepts, skills, topics covered by this test:

Commonly used constitutional terminology

Amendment process

The three branches of government and their powers

Principles of democracy:

- popular sovereignty
- federalism
- separation of powers
- checks and balances
- limited government
- judicial review

Basic constitutional concepts

Key rights provided by amendments:

- Bill of Rights
- Civil War Amendments 13, 14, 15
- 20th Century Amendments 16, 19, 26

2. *Know the rights and responsibilities of United States citizens and non-citizens*

Concepts, skills, topics covered by this test:

Fourteenth Amendment

Citizenship by birth:

- U. S. birth
- birth to U. S. citizen

Citizenship by naturalization:

- qualifications for citizenship
- steps to citizenship

Constitutional rights of U. S. citizens

Responsibilities of U. S. citizens:

- civic participation
- voting