Appendix S: Essential Elements of a High School Capstone Project

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.

In this Civic Readiness Capstone project, students will:

- Examine the community to 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

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 counterhypotheses.	Identify opportunities for and the role of the individual in social and political participation in the school, local, and/or state community.

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

Essential Elements	Civic Knowledge	Civic Skills	Civic Mindset
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 a 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. • *For example, asset mapping, conducting interviews and administering surveys will help students understand the issue from different perspectives, including diverse cultural groups.*	Analyze and evaluate news, media, social media, and other sources of information for accuracy, bias, reliability, and credibility.	
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.

Essential Elements	Civic Knowledge	Civic Skills	Civic Mindset
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.	

Essential Elements	Civic Knowledge	Civic Skills	Civic Mindset
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. For more information about asset mapping, visit https://www.vistacampus.gov/what-asset-mapping
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 regarding a particular social problem or public policy