

Country to Country, Classroom to Classroom: Making Connections

Presented by
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Purpose

- The purpose and goal of Project Citizen is to foster an understanding of the process involved in creating public policy, and to encourage individual involvement in the issues and concerns that lead to that policy-making.....students become actively involved in the process, and have an opportunity to actually present their research and findings, making public policy decisions.



Process

- Exploring issues.....
school
community
state
national

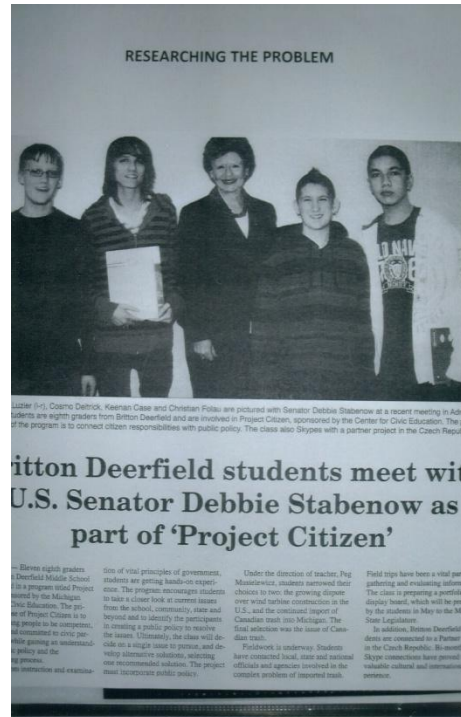
Determining who are
the responsible
persons in each
area of concern

- Researching details in
areas of concern.....

Decision-making.....

- need for local
crossing light
- county wind
turbine conflict
- import of Canadian
trash into Michigan





Students Meet with U.S. Senator Stabenow in Adrian

The Senator was eager to answer student questions and was supportive of their project ideas. The students were impressed.....it was a real highpoint in the project. Senator Stabenow continued to respond to their questions via email throughout their work. Following this meeting, a decision was made to proceed with the Canadian trash issue.





A VISIT TO CARLETON FARMS LANDFILL

Students find not a typical “dump”.

Begin to question their decision to stop Canadian trash.





CLASSROOM VISIT BY FORMER STATE REPRESENTATIVE DOUG SPADE

Students roundtable with Mr. Spade, getting a real-life perspective of what it takes to create public policy. He emphasizes “many stakeholders” and the need for “consensus”. Shares new proposal just offered by Senator Stabenow to stop Canadian trash import to Michigan.....just what students needed!



PROJECT BOARD & PORTFOLIO

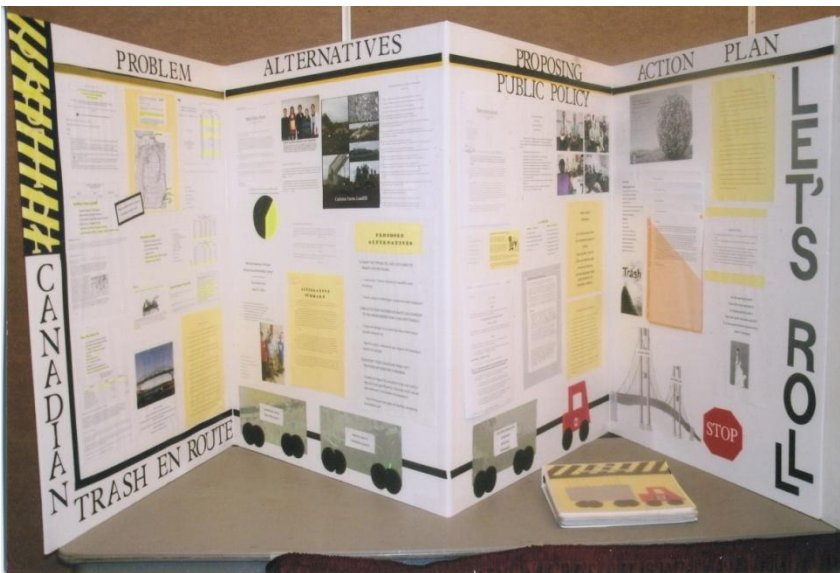
- Four Required Topics:

1) Identifying the problem

2) Identifying alternatives

3) Public Policy Proposal

4) Creating an action plan



PROJECT PRESENTATION

STATE CAPITOL APRIL 12, 2011

Students present and discuss their research and proposal with team of judges in Senate hearing room.



Students spend time touring the Capitol and attending special luncheon.





BLUE RIBBON 1st PLACE
PROJECT WILL REPRESENT MICHIGAN
IN THE NATIONALS!



LEARNING POINTS & REFLECTIONS

- The issue of Canadian trash is very complex.
- In any issue, there are many stakeholders, and more than one to consider.
- It is important to review and consider all options.
- Reaching consensus means making the best decision that negatively affects the least number of people.
- It is important to stay informed and let your voice be heard.
- Being a citizen means that you have certain responsibilities including active participation in all levels of government.



PROJECT CITIZEN
THE INTERNATIONAL COMPONENT

A PARTNER PROGRAM
RUN CONCURRENTLY
WITH PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH



PURPOSE AND PROCESS

- The purpose of the international program is to promote awareness and understanding, and to find common ground with your partners.
- The process runs concurrently with the Project work, as your partner classroom is also working on a public policy issue in their country. The requirements and guidelines for Project Citizen are the same in both countries.



MEETING THROUGH SKYPE

- Our bi-weekly contact was facilitated through Skype, and was projected on a Smartboard.
- Students in each country prepared answers to five specific questions about their projects, different for each meeting.
- After social introductions and salutations, students rotated the question/answer session.
- The culmination to the semester project was presenting final projects to each other with international judging.



Dobry Den!

- Our partner city/country was Prague, Czech Republic.
- Vera Chechakova and I exchanged initial emails to set up a schedule. She claimed her English was not good, but it really was. I spoke no Czech. Her students were 9th graders. Mine were 8th, 11 boys in a Speech class.
- The biggest drawback was the time difference. When it was 8am here, it was 2pm there. That itself was a learning experience. We met at 8am.



INITIAL SKYPE

- Our first meeting was full of curiosity and questions.....already students were finding out how much they had in common.....

Lady Gaga, Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken, sports, American-style dress, emails and Utube. Responses were very positive. Both groups of students signed-off simultaneously with peace signs.

(I am sorry I do not have video or pictures of these meetings...it was quite wonderful!)



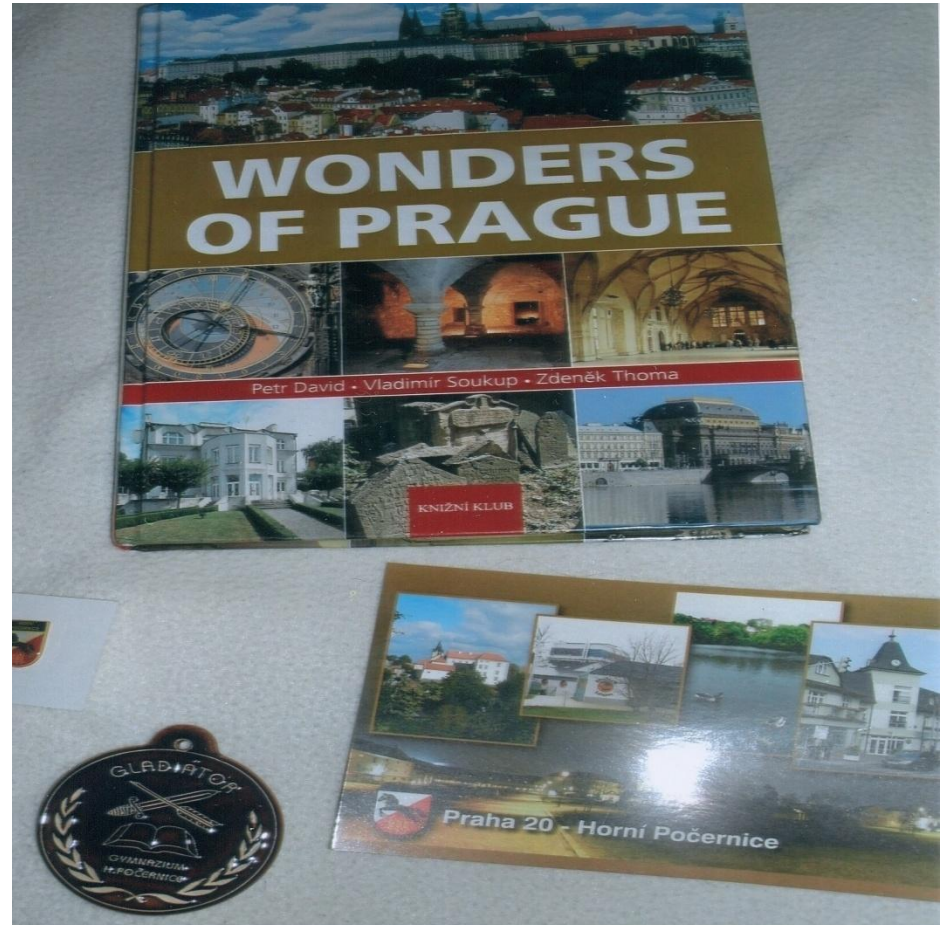
OOPS! NO VISUAL....

- On our third Skype, we received only audio. To my surprise, students recognized speakers by the sound of their voices and could identify many by name, even with no visual.
- We began learning Czech words. One student wrote them down, and greeted students in the hall with delight!
- Czech students completed their project on better nutrition....that is a big issue here as well. Our partners shared that trash was a concern there too, especially imported from Germany. Wow!
- Learning points!



GIFT EXCHANGE

- We sent a small package containing travel folders, friendship bracelets, coins (MI quarters), and rulers with US states and presidents.
- We received a travel book of Prague (in English), postcards and pins, and ceramic medals as rewards for their project games, enough for all.



International Presentation & Judging

- The culmination of our international experience was the exchange of project presentations.
- With technical assistance, we broadcast from our school library.
- Czech students presented from the U.S. Embassy.
- The U.S. Ambassador was one of the judges. He asked some tough questions of our students.







TEACHER'S REFLECTION

I took on this project in the year I retired.....

What a wonderful experience to end my career!

I learned with my students...it was hands-on.

We understand public policy and how to get there.

We've become world travelers and absorbed some
valuable lessons about building international
relationships.

We have stepped out of our small homogeneous
community into the greater world.

Vera and I still email...we have a lot in common too!





"I will never forget the experiences I've had over this semester, and I don't think anyone else will"Ryon

MASCLADANO!

