POWER CIVICS©
TOOLKIT

Contents

- *Citizen Power & The Art of No-Blame Problem Solving - A 21st Century Citizens Manual*

- **Power Civics - Overview and Essential Elements**

- **Historical Context & Principal Subject Matter Areas**

- **Recommended Readings**

- **10 Step No-Blame Problem Solving Guide**

- **Power Civics Community Forum Goals and Organizing Guide**

- **10 Five-Minute Video Classes** with downloadable notes (available online at http://thecitizenscampaign.org)

- **Curriculum Evaluation Materials**............................

WELCOME
TO THE TOOLKIT
FOR
POWER CIVICS© !

■

Thank you for your interest in teaching students about becoming citizen leaders who are aware that they have new powers that go beyond voting and can play a new role as a "public citizen" in our 21st century democracy.

We hope you find this Toolkit useful as you take your students on an exciting adventure of civic empowerment! Yes - we have serious problems, but we also have the power to offer serious solutions.

Welcome aboard!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

■   ■   ■

TEXT:

Citizen Power & The Art of No-Blame Problem Solving

Please use the text **_Citizen Power & The Art of No-Blame Problem Solving- A 21ST Century Citizens Manual_** which is enclosed in this Toolkit, throughout your classes.

It includes citizens' legal rights to participate in government decision making, a No-Blame Problem Solving Guide, and information on how students can take non-elected leadership roles in their city.

■   ■   ■

POWER CIVICS© OVERVIEW
& ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Developed by experienced practitioners in local government in partnership with professors who are experts in the emerging discipline of "beyond the ballot" civic engagement, **Power Civics**© provides students with the tools to become active and informed participants in government problem solving and decision making. The goals and objectives of a college **Power Civics**© course are to:

A. Improve students' collaborative problem solving skills, especially with respect to public issues that can be addressed at the community level.

B. Enable students to engage effectively with local government, and by doing so at this most accessible level, learn the skills and tactics needed to effectively engage at the state and national level as well.

C. Expose students to an important body of current and historic literature about civic engagement and the efficiency of local problem solving.

More specifically, **Power Civics**© teaches students:

- How to use technology to find proven solutions and to employ media literacy in the search for solutions

- How to access information about current government policy details

- How to craft cost effective, evidence-based solutions

- How to use a No-Blame strategy to keep the focus on their solution

- How to use citizens' legal rights to research, present, and advance solutions before local government decision-making bodies

- How to maintain a respectful, ongoing pursuit of progress toward the adoption of solutions

- How to engage in public service without having to run for public office

We expect and encourage any professor teaching the course to bring their own knowledge and creativity to the design of the syllabus and selection of course materials. As a result, we have kept the essential elements outlined below to a minimum. As different professors teach **Power Civics**© we want to be able to put their experience and insights to work as we further shape and refine this unique approach to civic engagement.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
FOR THE POWER CIVICS CURRICULUM:

1. Use of *Citizen Power & The Art of No-Blame Problem Solving* as the primary course text

2. Inclusion of project-based learning via the **10-Step No-Blame Problem Solving system**

3. A service component consisting of student-led, community based forums to introduce residents to citizen problem solving and a free online *Power Civics*© curriculum

Power Civics Historical Context
and Subject Matter Areas

Historical Context

- Our country's problem solving capacity is inadequate due to
  (a) population increases;
  (b) voter franchise expansion; and
  (c) technological acceleration

- Citizens have new legal and technological powers that give them the ability to contribute to public issue problem solving and participate in the government decision making process on the adoption of solutions

- This "beyond the ballot" participation requires a practitioners' perspective of how best to apply these new citizen powers to participate in government problem solving

Principal Subject Matter Areas

- New citizens' legal rights to participate in government problem solving and decision making

- 21st century technological advances that accelerate solutions research and sharing

- Political strategies and tactics for citizen problem solving
  – A practitioners' guide

- Non-elected citizen leadership roles

- Power Civics community forum, including student identification of community residents in need of political power

RECOMMENDED READINGS: (A SUGGESTED SHORT LIST)

The theme of the readings suggested below is the benefits, both personal and governmental, of students/citizens learning to become "public citizens" capable of exercising the fullness of their political power to the betterment of their communities and their country.

1. ***The Human Condition*** by Hannah Arendt
   – Part I   The Human Condition, and
   – Part II The Public and the Private Realm.
   This reading will introduce students to the concept that they cannot achieve the fullness of their humanity until they exercise their public voice.

2. ***Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*** by Walter Isaacson - Chapter 5, Public Citizen. This reading will provide students with a powerful example of what it means to be a "Public Citizen."

3. ***Citizen Power & The Art of No-Blame Problem Solving - A 21st Century Citizens Manual -***
   This text will empower students to become 21st Century Public Citizens capable of exercising emerging legal rights of participation in government decision making together with the political and technological skills to maximize outcomes.

4. ***If Mayors Ruled The World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*** by Benjamin R. Barber
   – Chapter 1, Why Cities Should Govern Globally,
   – Chapter 3, The City and Democracy, and
   – Chapter 4, Mayors Rule!
   This reading will enlighten students to the reality that city-based actions, when "shared," can have national impact on major issues.

10 STEP
NO-BLAME
PROBLEM
SOLVING
GUIDE

STEP 1   IDENTIFY YOUR ISSUE FOCUS
DRILL DOWN TO A SPECIFIC PROBLEM YOU CARE ABOUT

☐ Engage in bottom-up conversations with your fellow citizens to identify consensus passions about specific issues.

☐ Prioritize identified issues.
Considerations may include:
internal support (within the group),
expected external support
(from community and/or administration),
timing, difficulty of the problem, scope of problem, etc.

☐ Drill down the issue(s) to a discernible problem in the chosen issue area that you believe you can tackle with a doable solution.

STEP 2   SUBMIT AN OPRA REQUEST
FIND OUT HOW THE CURRENT POLICY WORKS

☐ First, investigate what your city is currently doing to address your priority issue by exploring the city's website, media coverage, or making phone calls to the office of the City Clerk.

☐ Dig deeper by preparing an OPRA (Open Public Records Act) request of documents creating the current policy for submission either to the City Clerk or to the Secretary of the School Board.
Remember that you are requesting copies of _existing records_ (e.g. resolutions, ordinances, written policies and procedures), so be as specific as possible.

☐ Find, complete, and submit the OPRA Request to the appropriate party. Forms should be found on city websites; if not, call the City Clerk and have them email you a blank request form.

STEP 3 CONDUCT EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH
FIND PROVEN SUCCESSFUL POLICIES

☐ An internet search is the best place to start! Look up your priority issue to find policies with evidence of success in communities similar to your own. Look for news articles, policy papers, or websites on the topic.

☐ Dig deeper. Look into academic institutions, including university departments and centers that specialize in the issue area.

☐ Call or check websites of associations whose focus is local government (e.g. Urban Mayors Association) or who deal with your issue area (e.g. The New Jersey Association of Environmental Commissions).

☐ Review The Citizens Campaign's Menu of Solutions which contains evidence based solutions previously developed by other Citizens Campaign participants and the experts from its Law and Policy Task Force.

STEP 4 SHAPE YOUR SOLUTION
TAILOR YOUR SOLUTION TO FIT LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND BUILD UPON THE CURRENT POLICY

☐ Dig deeper to determine what it took to implement your researched solution.

(**1**) How long did it take to put into effect?

(**2**) Were staff reassigned to implement it?

(**3**) Was any staff training required?

(**4**) Was the budget amended to reallocate funds for the new policy?

☐ Review the current policy that you seek to modify or replace and determine if there are any parts of it worth keeping as is or with slight modification.

☐ Consider any feedback or concerns expressed by elected officials or government staff about your proposed policy.

☐ Now shape your solution to address the information you've collected in the reviews referenced above. The more your solution fits with and positively builds on the current policy, and the more it takes into consideration the feedback of government officials and the hurdles of implementation, the better chance of it being adopted and successfully implemented.

STEP 5   MAKE SURE IT IS COST-EFFECTIVE
A PRACTICAL SOLUTION IS BUDGET NEUTRAL - OR BETTER

☐ From evidence you gathered in your research, determine whether there will be costs involved in implementing your solution such as: administrative costs, staff time, etc., or whether it will be cost-neutral (or better yet – cost saving).

☐ If there are costs involved, look at your city's budget to determine whether your solution would be covered by a particular line item, and if not, whether there are any other areas from which savings could be sufficient to offset the costs of your solution.

☐ If the solution is not covered by the city's budget and you cannot find any offsetting budget cuts, come up with alternative funding sources. Look for grants, consider crowd funding, etc. This is especially important if there are start-up costs that will disappear or be offset by savings in future budgets.

STEP 6   DO THE DOABLE
THE ART OF PHASING AND PILOTING

- ☐ It's often better to start smaller and gain traction in order to build support and find funds for the overall solution.

- ☐ **"Phasing"** is a good tactic- (implementing the solution in steps or phases) especially when full funding is not available.

- ☐ **"Pilot"** projects are also useful when there is skepticism about your solution or when you need to show that start-up costs will be offset by savings in future budgets.

STEP 7   GET SUPPORT FROM OUR EXPERTS
SUCCESSFUL PRACTITIONERS CAN PROVIDE LEGAL AND STRATEGIC ADVICE

- ☐ Submit your research to The Citizens Campaign in a brief report that includes:
  - (**1**) the response to your OPRA request;
  - (**2**) your proposed solution, evidence of its success, and how you think it can fit in your city; and
  - (**3**) your cost analysis.

- ☐ After submitting the above research report, consider any advice from The Citizens Campaign's Law and Policy Task Force to assist with your analysis and the development of your proposal, including the preferred legal action for adoption. Options include ordinances, resolutions, executive orders, and administrative policies or procedures.

- ☐ Incorporate changes suggested by the expert(s) or conduct any suggested additional research.

STEP 8 — PRESENT A READY-TO-ADOPT SOLUTION
PRESENTING A DRAFT LAW CALLS FOR A VOTE

☐ Get a copy of the legal document that created your chosen successful solution. It is a good starting point to begin implementing the solution in your town.

☐ Work with a volunteer lawyer or your town's attorney, if supportive, to incorporate your chosen solution into the preferred legal format. Options include ordinances, resolutions, executive orders, and administrative policies or procedures.

☐ Make sure to include language recognizing the positive aspects of your town's existing policy and any recent, related initiatives in the draft of the law to enact your solution.

STEP 9 — MAKE A RESPECTFUL PRESENTATION
IF YOU GIVE RESPECT, YOU CAN COMMAND RESPECT

☐ Dress respectfully and address officials respectfully.

☐ Review your town's current policy and find what parts you agree with. Then come in complimenting the officials on that part(s) of the current policy and offer to build upon it.

☐ When speaking to the media, do not criticize public officials who disagree with your proposal. Be understanding of their positions and concerns and express confidence that you can work things out.

☐ If your solution is deferred for further discussion or review by government committees or experts, say:

"Please, may I ask to whom is this proposal being referred and when can we expect a response from this public body?"

☐ When meeting with an official who makes a commitment to do something to advance your solution, always ask what time frame they feel comfortable with for fulfilling the commitment.

☐ After meeting with an elected official, follow up with a written thank you note mentioning the commitments made by the official and the time frame they indicated they were comfortable with for fulfilling the commitment.

If it's an elected official who indicates that a department head or other staff person will act on the commitment, copy that person on the thank you note.

☐ Ask the Law and Policy Task Force if there is a way to implement the solution without governmental approval.

☐ Keep your solution in the picture by using social media and conventional media and keep it "No Blame."

☐ Ask for help from a person of influence in your community.

☐ Seek a resolution, or other support recommending your solution, from an appropriate board or commission.

☐ Try an Executive Order (if the Law and Policy Task Force decides it's legal) if there aren't enough votes for adopting an ordinance.

☐   Seek support from a government employees' union.

☐   Wait until election time and seek sponsorship from an incumbent who is a candidate (presidential and gubernational election times are preferable).

☐ If you meet with continuing opposition from the decision-maker, offer a compromise, if possible, such as a pilot or phased-in approach.

☐ Use Initiative and Referendum if the solution does not require a change to the zoning ordinance or an appro-priation of funds. Initiative and Referendum should only be used as a last resort.

■   ■   ■

POWER CIVICS COMMUNITY FORUM GOALS
& ORGANIZING GUIDE

GOALS

There are three primary goals of a **Power Civics** Community Forum:

1) to identify those community stakeholders who care about the community but lack the know-how needed to get results;

2) to connect with the community's people and its problems; and

3) to better learn the 10-Step, No-Blame Problem Solving method by teaching it to others.

The first goal helps students learn that potential citizen leaders who could positively improve their community are shackled by ignorance of their city's decision making centers, the legal and political levers by which they can affect decision making, and the basic tenets of practical problem solving of public issues. Students who care about social justice will also learn that there can be no racial or gender equality until there is equal access to the knowledge of how regular citizens can exercise the fullness of their political power.

The second goal - to connect with the community and its problems - helps students broaden and expand their understanding of the issues that affect their fellow citizens' daily lives. This understanding will drive student engagement, and the connection to community members who care about their city, will help to sustain it. The program for the Forum (as outlined in the Organizing Guide) reinforces this goal and is also designed to maximize the students' connection to present and potential local leaders and to local issues.

The third goal - to better learn the practice of practical No-Blame Problem Solving - is based upon the principle expressed by the first professor to host a Power Civics Community Forum: "To teach what you've learned is to truly learn." During the Forum, students teach and help community members learn how to apply this proven problem solving method to their own community-based issues. In doing so, students gain confidence in their newly learned problem solving skills and at the same time, teach their fellow citizens that they have more power than they think they have.

ORGANIZING GUIDE

1) **Length of Forum:**
   Minimum 1 ½ hours; 2 hours is preferable, as it permits a delayed start so that latecomers do not disrupt the Forum.

2) **Program:**
   Essential Elements -
   i) Selected students review the subjects of 10-online Power Civics video classes highlighting the theme "You have more power than you think you have" (20 minutes);

   ii) Students provide an overview of the 10-Step No-Blame Problem Solving method they learned in their own classes and use their own project(s) as an issue example(s);

   iii) Students ask the audience to choose one or more local problems which they would like to address. This can be done with the audience as a whole choosing one single issue, or by breaking the audience into groups of 6 or more interested in a particular issue.

   Optional Elements:
   i. If the city has a Civic Trust, Civic Trustees make excellent guest speakers. Approximately 5 minutes of remarks by a Civic Trustee talking about their experiencing local and political power that they were unaware they had, conveys a powerful and inspirational message.

   ii. Students can also offer a brief review of the process for applying to serve as an appointee of a city board or as a Civic Trustee. This too is often of interest to Forum audiences.

   Handouts:
   The above Optional Elements can be supplemented with the following:
   i. An application form for positions on city boards and commissions

   ii. An application form for Civic Trusteeship in their city, if the city hosts a Civic Trust, or an online application, if not

3) **Target Audience:**
   i. **Quality:** The size of the Forum audience is not as important as its quality or nature. A quality audience is composed of attendees who have an interest in empowering their city, but who lack knowledge of their power to get results without waiting for the political establishment to act.

ii. Size: The size of the audience may range from 30 to 150. Each student bringing one or two guests whom they know and who fit the "quality" criteria above, can result in more continuity of civic engagement for both students and their guests, and personal relationships often provide the glue for civic relationships. In some circumstances, where city nonprofits, civic and religious organizations are truly supportive, a larger audience size may be more desirable.

4) Location:

The best location for a Power Civics Community Forum is one that:

a) fits the projected audience size; a small audience in a cavernous space is not conducive to a good forum;

b) has a central/accessible location (an obvious benefit) and if possible, has mass transit accessibility (also considered a plus);

c) has available and proximate parking (always considered helpful); and finally,

(d) has audio/visual equipment available onsite, which is very helpful for use in showing the audience sample classes from the online Power Civics curriculum.

5) Convenient Forum Times:

City residents may have difficulty attending during usual work day hours, therefore, the best times are weekday evenings with a start time of between 6 or 7pm and/or Saturdays from 10:00 am to noon.

6) Refreshments:

Offering a light meal is helpful, especially if students are planning an evening forum for a smaller audience. This allows audience members to come directly from work and reduces the time demand on their busy lives. For Saturday morning forums, coffee and water, and perhaps some bagels or pastries can be provided.

Refreshments are not an essential element of the forum, but one cannot ignore the maxim that: "If you feed them, they will come."

7) Posters, invitations, notices

See the attached Power Civics Forum announcement, program and participant survey. These were used in a successful Power Civics Community Forum held at Rutgers-Newark.

RUTGERS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & ADMINISTRATION IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CITIZENS CAMPAIGN

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FORUM:
You Have More Power Than You Think
AGENDA

Welcome
Dean Charles E. Menifield

Opening Remarks
Harry Pozycki, Founder of The Citizens Campaign

Step 1:	**Identify Your Issue Focus**	Team 1
Step 2:	**Submit an OPRA Request**	Team 1
Step 3:	**Conduct Evidence-Based Research**	Team 2
Step 4:	**Shape Your Solution**	Team 2
Step 5:	**Make Sure it is Cost-Effective**	Team 3
Step 6:	**Do the Doable**	Team 3
Step 7:	**Get Support from Our Experts**	Team 4
Step 8:	**Draft a Ready-to-Adopt Solution**	Team 4
Step 9:	**Make a Respectful Presentation**	Team 5
Step 10:	**Respectful Pursuit**	Team 5

Q&A and Evaluations

Thank You & Closing Remarks
Professor Rene Deída

Post pictures on Instagram (#RutgersSPAA) or Twitter (@RutgersSPAA)

DECEMBER 1, 2018

RUTGERS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS & ADMINISTRATION IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CITIZENS CAMPAIGN

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FORUM
PARTICIPANT SURVEY

1. **I learned more about the 10 steps of no-blame problem solving.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. **The presenters were knowledgeable of the subject matter that was covered.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. **The format of the presentations was conducive to learning.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. **I am interested in pursuing civic engagement further.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. **I am more committed to serving my community after learning about the process.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. **I believe I have the power to solve problems in my community.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

7. **I am thinking about watching the power civics videos that are available online.**

   ☐ Strongly Agree   ☐ Agree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Strongly Disagree

What did you like most about this training?

_____

_____

What aspects of the training could be improved?

_____

_____

Other Comments:

_____

_____

DECEMBER 1, 2018

Power Civics Online

(Available at http://thecitizenscampaign.org)

VIDEO CLASSES:

1. The Power to Find and Advance Practical Solutions
(Tech Advances and New Legal Rights)

2. The Power of No-Blame Problem Solving:
Part 1 – Researching Your Solution

3. The Power of No-Blame Problem Solving:
Part 2 – Adapting Your Solution

4. The Power of No-Blame Problem Solving:
Part 3 – Presenting and Pursuing Your Solution

5. Media Literacy and the Search for Solutions

6. The Four Decision Centers and
Your Legal Rights to Advance Your Solutions
- Municipal Governing Bodies
- School Boards
- Planning Board
- Political Parties

7. The Four Paths to Citizen Power
- Civic Trustee

8. The Four Paths to Citizen Power
- Appointed Office Holder

9. The Four Paths to Citizen Power
- Political Party Representative

10. The Four Paths to Citizen Power
- Solutions Newsgatherer

CURRICULUM EVALUATION MATERIALS

Included in the Toolkit are sample Pre- and Post-Curriculum Evaluation Surveys for students and Evaluation Questionnaires for professors. These surveys can be found on the Toolkit flash drive and also online at http://thecitizenscampaign.org. If you would kindly share the completed surveys with us, they will help us improve Power Civics©!

POWER CIVICS©

PRE-COURSE EVALUATION SURVEY FOR STUDENTS

Please complete this short Power Civics© questionnaire. Your answers will help us improve the Power Civics© experience in the classroom setting.

1 • How much attention do you pay to national politics and government?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A little attention
- ☐ No attention at all

2 • How much attention do you pay to politics and government in your community?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A little attention
- ☐ No attention at all

3 • How much "say" or power do you think you have to influence local government decision-making in your city/town if you wanted to?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A little
- ☐ No say at all

4 • Thinking about your community, how much "say" or power to influence local government decision-making do you think residents generally have if they choose to exercise such power?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A little
- ☐ No say at all

5 • Are you planning to participate in local government, politics or civic affairs?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

POWER CIVICS©

Please complete this short Power Civics© questionnaire. Your answers will help us improve the Power Civics© experience in the classroom setting.

1 • What did you like most about learning Power Civics©?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2 • What did you like least about learning Power Civics©?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3 • How can Power Civics© be improved?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4 • How useful did you find learning *Power Civics©*?
- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Not at all useful

5 • How useful did you find the text
CITIZEN POWER & THE ART OF NO-BLAME PROBLEM SOLVING?
- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Not at all useful

6 • How useful did you find the videos?
- ☐ Very useful
- ☐ Somewhat useful
- ☐ Not at all useful

7 • Now that you've taken the Power Civics© classes, how much more likely are you to participate in local government, politics and civic affairs?
- ☐ Much more likely
- ☐ Somewhat more likely
- ☐ Only a little more likely
- ☐ No more likely

POWER CIVICS©

1 • **Generally speaking, do you believe that Power Civics© is a positive addition to your classes?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

2 • **What did you like most about teaching *Power Civics©*?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3 • **What did you like least about teaching *Power Civics*?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4 • **How can *Power Civics©* be improved?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5 • **How useful did you find the *Power Civics©* materials? Do you have any suggestions for changes or improvements in the text, CITIZEN POWER & THE ART OF NO-BLAME PROBLEM SOLVING, or the videos?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6 • **Would you like to share any other comments or advice?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____