

Civic Knowledge & Action Project: Census Participation Campaign

Overview

Exploring political participation is one exciting way that students can complete their AP® U.S. Government & Politics project. In collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau, the AP Program has created an optional project that will allow interested students to participate in creating a census participation campaign in their communities. This optional project meets the course curricular requirement by engaging students in the sustained, real-world application of their coursework. The following are important considerations to keep in mind as students select an applied civics project.

The project must require students to:

- Connect course concepts to real-world issues.
- Demonstrate disciplinary practices.
- Share/communicate their findings in an authentic way.

You should:

- Ensure that the project complies with local school/district guidelines and policies.
- Consider the length of the course (half year versus full year) when determining complexity of the project.
- Ensure that the project is appropriate for:
 - Age and maturity of the student.
 - The availability of resources.
- Provide feedback to students about conceptual understanding and skill development.

SUGGESTED TIMING

The project should be completed over the course of several weeks, with the main target launch date of Census Day, April 1, 2020. The project may, however, be completed before or after the AP Exam or integrated throughout the course.

Connections to the AP U.S. Government & Politics Course Framework

- **Enduring Understanding MPA-3:** Factors associated with political ideology, efficacy, structural barriers, and demographics influence the nature and degree of political participation.
- **Disciplinary Practice 1.E:** Explain how political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors apply to different scenarios in context.
- **Enduring Understanding PMI-4:** Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.

Before You Start

This project should begin after students have completed **Topic 5.2: Voter Turnout**.

PROJECT

Part 1 Determining the Need for the 2020 Census in Your Community

- Provide students with the opportunity to investigate the major challenges facing their community in 2020 and the significance of the 2020 Census using *The Opportunity Atlas Activity* provided by the U.S. Census Bureau: [The Opportunity Atlas Activity](#). This activity, along with the accompanying worksheet, will allow students to analyze, compare, and interpret key demographic data in a specific U.S. zip code to determine social outcomes for individuals in the corresponding census tract. After reviewing the demographic data in small groups or independently (per the activity instructions), students in the class should share:
 - Key factors impacting social mobility in the selected neighborhood.
 - How data access tools—such as *The Opportunity Atlas*—can assist in gathering information to start a citizen action campaign.

Before Moving On

This project should involve student participation in a nonpartisan service-learning opportunity. Students who choose to further engage in a census registration project should be prepared to develop strategies to engage citizens in their local communities.

Part 2 Designing and Implementing a Census Participation Campaign

- Coach students in the design of a census participation campaign to increase the awareness of the 2020 Census.
 - Share the U.S. Census Bureau [Student Take-Home Flyer](#).
 - Provide guidance from the U.S. Census Bureau [2020 Census Engagement Toolkit for Students](#) on creating a social media civic campaign to raise awareness for the 2020 Census.
 - ◆ Confirm students have built a team with a clear structure before engaging in the census participation campaign.
 - ◆ Confirm students understand the significant facts of the 2020 Census.
 - ◆ Align the guidance from the U.S. Census Bureau on social media campaigns with the rules/restrictions that exist in your local community.
- Provide students with support as they build a local campaign for the 2020 Census, and confirm that their communications are appropriate and aligned with local school policies throughout the duration of the project.

Selecting Students for Census Participation Project

Teachers should allow only one student group to run a census participation campaign per school to ensure maximum success for making sure that all eligible community members are counted.

Activity Variation

If technology is unavailable to students, you may do this as a class with a projector or interactive whiteboard, selecting specific cities or towns that apply to your students. Additionally, you could print out the relevant maps, tables, and graphs for students to view in class.

Before Moving On

Teachers should remind students that stances on candidates and the impending election should remain nonpartisan. The census is mandated in the Constitution under Article 1, Section 2.

Part 3 Debrief of the Project

- Celebrate the work the students accomplished by encouraging an upload of pictures from the census participation campaign through local and school media.
- Provide students with the opportunity to share/communicate findings from leading a census participation campaign as part of the applied civics project for AP U.S. Government & Politics (e.g., presentation, speech, multimedia, podcast).
 - Student presentations should connect course concepts to the significance of census participation and demonstrate an application of the AP U.S. Government & Politics disciplinary practices.
- Confirm students understood how political ideologies and political participation shape policy and choices in American politics by asking clarifying questions throughout the presentations:
 - Why do some people choose to participate in the census count while others do not?
 - How does who you are affect whether you participate or not?
 - To what extent do you believe the establishment of a local, student-led census participation campaign contributed to increased civic participation in your community?

Before Moving On

Under our Constitution, effective governing is achieved through citizen participation. Students should be able to describe the many ways that increased participation in the 2020 Census can influence policymakers and impact the decisions that will affect their daily lives. Connections between this project and **Unit 5: Political Participation** of the AP U.S. Government & Politics course framework should be evident if students made the appropriate connections throughout the duration of the census participation campaign.