

## The Civic Action Project & Common Core State Standards Constitutional Rights Foundation

The Civic Action Project (CAP) provides numerous opportunities for teachers to integrate the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (CCSS ELA).

The CAP lessons require specific reading, writing, discussion, and presentation skills and have been correlated with CCSS ELA. Teachers access the lessons on the CAP website and each lesson provides a link to pertinent CCSS ELA standards. ([Lessons 1-5 are currently correlated.](#) Correlations for Lessons 6-14 will be completed soon.)



CAP is a project-based learning model that requires students to think deeply about the issues they work on. There are opportunities for students to master many CCSS standards as they work on their civic action projects. Students research issues and policies using a variety source materials and media. The CAP Planner requires students to write about their selected issues, civic actions they intend to take, and outcomes. In

addition, students who are assigned to prepare a CAP presentation use a variety of speaking, presentation, and media skills cited in CCSS ELA.

The students' civic action projects are structured by the CAP Planner, composed of four documents: Proposal, Thinking it Through, Civic Actions, CAP Report. Below is a description of how the CAP experience provides opportunities for students to master many CCSS ELA standards:



**WHST.11-12.1** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

*The **CAP Proposal** requires students to convince their teachers that the issue they have chosen is important and worthy of a CAP project. The planner is designed to help students make their arguments in a logical sequence, thus providing an introduction to the skills outlined in the standard. In addition, new blog activities will be available for teachers to assign that address this standard.*

**WHST.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

*As students work on their CAP issues, they will communicate with peers and adults. The CAP toolkit provides tips for composing clear, coherent, audience-appropriate writing of letters, emails, and other texts.*

**WHST.11-12.5** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

*Teachers should require CAP students to revise their CAP **Planning documents** as necessary. Students should be composing communications with adults inside and outside of the school campus and should focus on providing succinct, significant information in these communications by planning, revising, and editing. In addition, CAP students must often try new approaches to convince community members and policy-makers to respond to their concerns.*

**WHST.11-12.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

*CAP teachers can use the prompts from the **Planners** to create writing assignments that are completed through the CAP discussion board or student blog. Both teachers and students respond to the posts, and the writers respond to the feedback, often based on new arguments and information they have collected. In nearly all CAP classes, students are assigned to work in*



*groups and produce shared writing products, as well as published products through the CAP web site and CAP contests. In addition, CAP students have created Facebook pages and other social networking products as civic actions.*

**WHST.11-12.7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**WHST.11-12.9** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

*Through CAP, students select an issue, research that issue, and develop and implement civic actions to address it. This process requires students to generate specific questions and search for answers using multiple sources. The **Planner** requires students to continually demonstrate a deeper understanding of the issue they are working on: its implications, policy connections, causes/effects, and more.*

**RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**RH.11-12.9** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

*As students research their selected issues, they will analyze a variety of sources including news stories, policy statements, documents such as local ordinances, responses from policy-makers and others, as well as opinion/editorial pieces. Students read and analyze with purpose since they are addressing real-world issues. To ensure mastery of this standard, teachers should require students to attach sources and a brief analysis of each to their **CAP Planners**.*

**SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.



c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

*Both the CAP lessons and student projects promote collaborative discussions. CRF will develop new assessment tools for teachers and students aligned to this CCSS standard.*

**SL.11-12.3** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

*CAP students should be required to speak with community members, including policy-makers, about their issues and civic actions. The **Civic Action** document in the **CAP Planner** prompts students to report on these communications and teachers could require the students to further respond to the items in this standard.*

**SL.11-12.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

*The **CAP Report** provides a structure for students to develop CAP presentations and these presentations should address the items in this standard. **Rubrics** to assess presentations are available in both the Assessment and Teacher-Created Resource sections of the website.*

**SL.11-12.5** Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

*Every semester, students are invited to create **CAPfolios** and/or **Public Service Announcements** about their issues for submission in national contests. Protocols for each contest include items from this standard.*

**SL.11-12.6** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

*Through the CAP experience, students should be speaking to a variety of audiences including peers, adults at school, and adults in the community. Students should demonstrate their ability to use appropriate language, tone, and formality in each*



*situation and teachers could ask students to “debrief” their meetings and conversations in terms of the skills they used. In addition, the **Civic Action and Report Planners** require students to list specific skills they gained and applied, and many students list skills associated with speaking to a variety of audiences and modifying their speech accordingly. The CAP toolkit provides some direction for students.*

For more information visit the Civic Action Project web site:  
[www.crfcap.org](http://www.crfcap.org)

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