



Teaching Active Citizenship

Guidance for teachers



Foreword

Welcome to this guide – one of a series of publications from the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) that offer practical advice on teaching key areas of the national curriculum for Citizenship.

This document is particularly special, as it was co-constructed by ACT colleagues, teachers and researchers. Collaboration is one of our core values as an organisation and this is a brilliant example of the principle being put into practice.

Democratic societies are more likely to thrive when people are engaged and contribute positively to political and public life as voters, community members and informed, active citizens. For this reason, teaching active citizenship is central to the national curriculum for Citizenship at both Key Stages 3 and 4, and is a key focus for us at ACT.

Active citizenship is a teaching approach that uses active learning to equip students to take informed and responsible action aimed at making a positive difference in their communities. Effective active citizenship can take many forms; however, successful projects will usually address a real need or issue in the community. It will be realistic, have achievable outcomes and be student-led, wherever possible.

This can feel like a daunting challenge, which is where this guide – packed with teachers' practical ideas and insight – is particularly valuable. I hope you find it useful and enjoy reading it. If you would like to share your own experiences of teaching active citizenship, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Liz Moore

Chief Executive, Association
for Citizenship Teaching



Introduction

This guide is part of ACT's ongoing commitment to building and disseminating the professional knowledge base of Citizenship teachers. It has been co-constructed with teachers and researchers to distil principles and practical advice about what constitutes an effective pedagogy for active citizenship.

Earlier publications have tended to focus on the process of active citizenship – how and where to include it within teaching and the structure that students might follow. But in this publication we wanted to focus more on how teachers set up and manage active citizenship from a teaching perspective, in particular the practicalities of planning, acting and reflecting. To bring the process to life, there are case studies throughout the guide that capture teachers' experiences, with points for reflection to encourage deeper consideration of approaches.

Facilitating the type of work described in this guide is challenging, and you're unlikely to ever feel that you've totally cracked it, for all students, in every regard. Nevertheless, it's also important not to underestimate the potential of your teaching to transform lives. Active citizenship experiences in school really are likely to start a process that continues to affect your students into adulthood. Robert F. Kennedy talked about the importance of 'ripples of hope', and we hope you continue to generate those ripples, and perhaps learn how to make an even bigger splash in your school, so those ripples last longer and reach a little bit further.

This publication is the outcome of a conference held in April 2023 and a testament to the power of collaboration. Huge thanks to everyone who contributed to the co-development process and to Lee for leading the editing of this guidance with support from Zoe, Yaqub and Faiza:

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Introducing Active Citizenship



What is active citizenship education?

Defining active citizenship can be tricky, as discussions with seasoned Citizenship teachers demonstrated. Attempts to define the term produced more questions than answers:

- ? What exactly do the words ‘citizenship’ and ‘active’ mean in the phrase ‘active citizenship’?
- ? Is ‘citizenship’ about citizens’ rights and responsibilities or about democratic life and values more broadly?
- ? What does being an ‘active citizen’ mean? Is it about our relationship to government or to power and authority in general?
- ? Does raising money for charity or recycling waste at school count as active citizenship, or is it some other form of action?
- ? How important is it for students to choose their own active citizenship projects and is it acceptable for teachers to suggest or choose a project for them?
- ? What counts as a successful active citizenship project? Does a project have to achieve positive change in order for it to be considered a success and, if not, what criteria should it be judged on?

Therefore, rather than trying to come up with a neat definition, this guide focuses on four key goals of active citizenship in schools:



AGENCY

Helping students to recognise themselves as citizens with the ability to effect change in the world.



POLITICAL LITERACY

Giving students the understanding of how public, private and local to global institutions work, and the power and remit of these; and how citizens can effect change within these institutions and wider society.

For a fuller discussion of ‘political literacy’ see:
www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/why-political-literacy-is-at-the-heart-of-citizenship-education



AWARENESS

Providing an opportunity for students to consider how their beliefs and interests might conflict with other people’s, and how this conflict can be resolved within a framework of democratic values.



CAPACITY

Acquiring the knowledge, skills and concepts needed to be active citizens and to effect positive social and political change.

Taken together, these sum up what active citizenship means for teachers and students in schools.

What does active citizenship look like in practice?

The best way to achieve these goals is to get students to engage in active citizenship – that is, to be active citizens. The effectiveness of this approach is supported by a wide body of research on the pedagogy of active citizenship (Jerome *et al.*, 2022a).

What does active citizenship look like in practice though? Our discussions with teachers generated three more questions, which reflect the variety of practices and beliefs that shape citizenship education:

What counts as an active citizenship project?

How much agency should students have in developing their projects?

According to what criteria do we judge the success or failure of an active citizenship project?

The following sections briefly outline these questions and the kinds of issues they give rise to, before exploring the contentions in greater detail through case studies and reflections from practitioners. The case studies are not intended to offer clear-cut answers to these questions, but rather to present real-life examples to help new and non-specialist teachers think them through. They illustrate some of the tensions and difficulties that teachers engage with when they facilitate active citizenship projects. Each case study represents some excellent teaching, but also some frustrating loose ends and imperfections.



What counts as an active citizenship project?

Is raising money for charity an example of active citizenship? Should active citizenship be focused on local, national or global issues? Should it look at changing personal attitudes, public behaviours, government policy or legislation?

In England, since the advent of the Citizenship curriculum in 2002, it's been widely argued that for an action project to count as active citizenship it has to engage explicitly with political knowledge (Crick, 2002). This has generally been interpreted as knowledge about formal political institutions, rather than the micro-politics of families and other social institutions. But there is also a strong tradition of considering these micro-politics as important in themselves, such as in the feminist insight that the 'personal is political' (Hanisch, 1969) and in anti-racists' attention to the significance of 'micro-aggressions' (Johnson and Johnson, 2019).

What matters is not so much the project topic, but the form that it takes – how students go about conceptualising, implementing and reflecting on their projects.

Nevertheless, the traditional focus on formal politics can be seen in the case studies here. As you read these, think about whether each already incorporates a sufficient political dimension, or whether you think this could have been developed more.

Consider bearing in mind the distinction made by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), who argue that Citizenship education generally falls into three categories:

- Personally responsible citizenship, with a focus on conforming and volunteering. Such a citizen might donate to a food bank.
- Participatory citizenship, with a focus on building community engagement and understanding how institutions work and how citizens relate to them. Such a citizen might get involved in running a food bank.
- Justice-oriented citizenship, with a focus on developing understanding of social justice and how institutions do and do not work to promote social justice. Such a citizen is likely to research the root causes of hunger and act on long-term solutions.

Case Study 1: Responding to a natural disaster

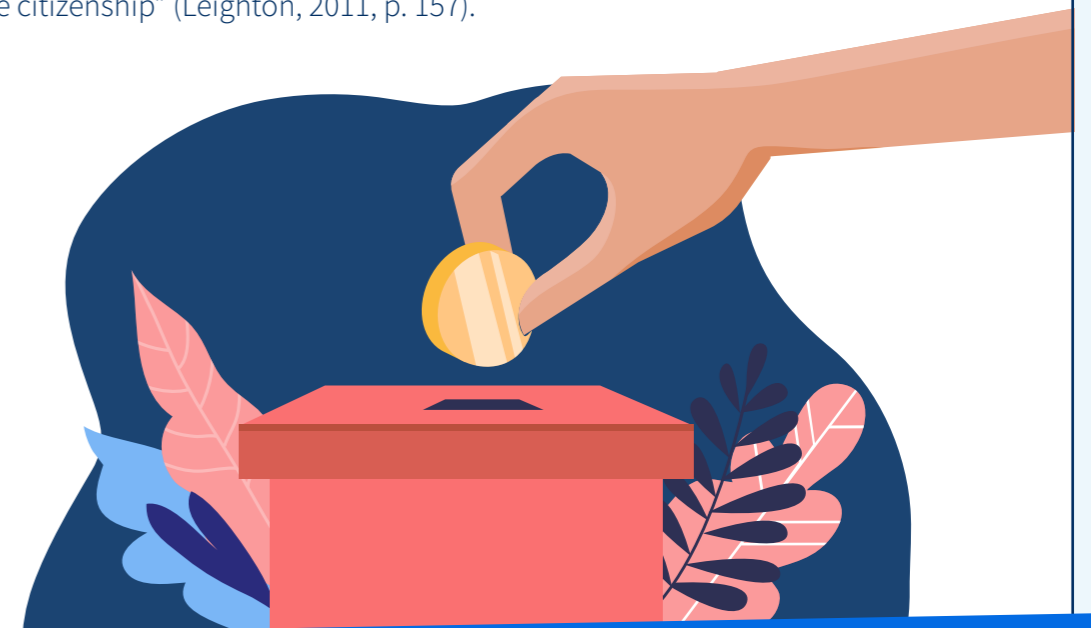
Contributed by Ben Miskell

DESCRIPTION

A group of students in my Year 8 class decided to raise money for the victims of famine in Ethiopia as part of their active citizenship project. The famine had been widely covered on the news and the students had felt compelled to take action. The students began researching the famine online using news websites and other secondary resources. They found that the famine was affecting a significant number of lives. Due to the distance involved and the nature of the issue, the students were unable to conduct primary research. Since they could not help the victims of the famine directly, they decided to help raise money for them instead. To this end, the students decided to survey their fellow students in school about their understanding of the famine and willingness to donate money to help those affected by it. Based on the results of their research, the students decided to organise a non-school uniform day to help raise money and to donate this to the UNICEF disaster relief fund.

REFLECTION

The students' effort to raise money for the victims of famine and to raise awareness about their plight is certainly commendable, and through the project students honed their research skills and developed a sense of agency. They were effective in raising awareness about an issue that mattered to them and in helping those in need. In its existing form, though, the project left many avenues unexplored. It did not investigate the wider issues surrounding the famine – for example, why the victims of the famine were unable to turn to their own government for help or the historical and economic factors that contributed to the current situation. The students could also have evaluated the UK Government's response to the crisis and determined whether or not this was adequate and how they might address this. In the words of educationalist Ralph Leighton, the project was "not sufficient to develop a sense of meaningful lifelong agency in the context of active citizenship" (Leighton, 2011, p. 157).



Case Study 2: Tackling local food poverty

Contributed by Steven Humphrys

DESCRIPTION

A group of my Year 10 GCSE students decided to work together to help tackle food poverty in the local area. They focused on a local issue because the AQA specification requires that students “challenge injustice or resolve a local community issue”. Their decision to focus on food poverty, meanwhile, came about after doing some preliminary online research about issues affecting their community. The students looked at local news sources and statistical data and drew on their own knowledge of the local area, and based on this information they decided that the best course of action would be to collect food for a local food bank. Students selected a local food bank and researched the food items needed at the specific bank (rather than simply collecting general food items for donation). To this end, they contacted the food bank and made use of the research on the Trussell Trust website.

As part of their project, the students produced a range of campaigning materials. These included a PowerPoint presentation for a school assembly, introducing the issue of food poverty to the wider school community. The PowerPoint presentation focused on the localised nature of food poverty and included personal stories about food poverty as well as statistical data. This approach to the issue, the students decided, would make food poverty more relevant and relatable to students, even if they did not suffer from food poverty themselves. The use of stories was particularly important for students, as they thought the stories allowed the issue to be humanised and made ‘real’ rather than just offering abstract numbers. The students in the group also reflected on the importance of presenting the stories in a way that did not negatively stereotype those who relied on food banks. Following the presentation, each form group was given a notice for their noticeboard with a list of required food items and the dates by which they were to be collected. The student group followed this up with regular form drop-ins to remind students to donate food items.

REFLECTION

The project was a success as the school community brought many different items of food for the food bank and students were able to provide a localised and short-term solution to the issue. The project allowed students to see themselves as agents of change, as they saw first-hand their ability to recognise and respond to a local problem, albeit in a short-term and very localised way. As well as learning more about food poverty, the project also allowed students to develop some of the skills necessary for active citizenship. They began to understand how to plan and bring about change within their community and to reflect on the scale of change that is achievable in a given time-frame and with limited resources.

To improve the project, students could have spent more time exploring government policy around food poverty. This would have linked their project more closely to other elements of the GCSE specification, e.g. different political ideologies, select committees, role of MPs, etc. Moreover, students could have connected with a power structure, helping them recognise and understand the power of those in government to enact change. For example, they could have contacted a Member of Parliament to express their concern about food poverty and to discuss how they could have helped the issue in the local constituency. Considering their future, students learned about the importance of connecting with power structures and understanding that those who are elected to represent them should involve themselves in community issues and understand first-hand the issues of the area.

Case Study 3: Changing attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees

Contributed by Steven Humphrys

DESCRIPTION

For their GCSE Citizenship project, a group of my Year 10 students decided that they wanted to help combat misinformation and disinformation around asylum seekers and refugees. The project aimed to equip students in Year 8 (they selected two forms for logistical purposes) with a knowledge and understanding of migration, with reference to asylum seekers and refugees and how, often, when presented in the media, their representation wasn’t always accurate and at times was sensationalised. Students devised a short lesson activity, which included defining key terms including migration, asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced people, etc. Once the Year 8 students understood this, the GCSE students contextualised migration patterns by drawing on their research, using UNHCR data on where migration takes place around the world. This aimed to help dispel myths about the numbers of migrants coming to the UK and to combat migration stereotypes, especially with regard to the nations that do/do not support the most migrants.

During their research, the GCSE students considered how to relate the topic to the young students in Year 8 and, with this in mind, sourced video clips and case studies featuring young people. They felt using other young people was an important aspect of the project, as much media coverage is focused on adults rather than on children. The project attempted to relate the impact of forced movement and provide the opportunity for Year 8 to consider which emotions may be involved in suddenly having to leave your home.

REFLECTION

To an extent, the project was successful. GCSE students taught younger students some new knowledge about migration and gave them the space and opportunity to reflect on the media’s presentation. The students also demonstrated a degree of agency and the ability to effect change. They understood that knowledge is power, and that equipping young students with an understanding of migration and how the media operates is important in changing mindsets. But this is only one aspect of influence; there are others that were not touched upon, e.g. peers, family, other forms of media, personal experience, etc. There was no investigation into how agencies operate, e.g. national government departments and NGOs. While the UN was briefly mentioned, more could have been done to consider the role of civil society in shaping government policy. In hindsight, away from the stresses of trying to get 50 young people through a GCSE in limited time, with students having nine other subjects to study, the project could have been better.



Case Study 4: Making school more inclusive to trans people

Contributed by Ben Miskell

DESCRIPTION

A group of students in my Year 10 class decided that they would look at the inclusion of young trans people at school for their active citizenship project. The students began by searching online to find existing information and news sources about what other schools had done to promote inclusion. They drew on this secondary research to identify key people they wanted to engage and to develop their own approach to primary research. The students chose to survey as many schoolmates as possible, making sure that trans voices were heard. They also held video conferencing calls with the chief executive of a local LGBT+ organisation and a local Member of Parliament. Their research revealed that many trans students wanted gender-neutral toilets in the school and that there was a lack of awareness about trans issues in society and the rest of the school.

To effect change, the students took a two-pronged approach: (i) they lobbied the school's senior leadership to ask for change and (ii) they raised awareness among the wider student body. To lobby decision-makers in the school, the students presented a report to the deputy head as a case for change, based on their primary research survey. They also put together a series of practical proposals for how gender-neutral toilets could be introduced into the school. To raise awareness of trans issues, they hosted an LGBT+ pride day, covering the school in pride flags and hosting a bake sale to raise money for a local LGBT+ charity. Every student who purchased a bun decorated with the pride flag received a leaflet generated by the students about trans issues.

REFLECTION

The project certainly helped the students to build their own understanding of this issue and to think about priorities for the school. Their activities helped to raise awareness among students, but some of the bigger requests, such as changing toilet configurations, are likely to require more sustained efforts and collaboration with staff. These kinds of actions require resources and probably need to be planned over time, in line with other premises maintenance and development work.

Points for reflection

- Do you agree with the teachers' self-evaluations about possible shortcomings and next steps for each project?
- What areas, if any, would you suggest to develop in future similar projects?
- What do these case studies demonstrate about the nature of active citizenship in schools?
- Does Westheimer and Kahne's categorisation of citizenship help you think about the assumptions underlying these projects?



How much agency should students have in developing projects?

Teachers often feel that in an ideal world, students would choose their project and run with it. In the real world, though, things are not so straightforward.

Active citizenship should see students directly involved in developing their project and establishing a degree of ownership over it, but the role that they play in doing this can vary. Ultimately, it is up to teachers to decide how much freedom they give students to choose and lead their own project. This will be determined by the time available, the size and nature of the class, prior experience of the students, the level of risk in each project, the resources available, access to decision-makers, the confidence level of teachers, the attitude of parents and various other factors.

There is often a default blueprint in mind of an active citizenship project undertaken by an individual or small group, who conceive the idea, plan independently and exercise autonomy in implementing it. The degree to which students do not exercise independence may be seen as a weakness of the project, but teachers should also be aware that this capacity to exercise agency does not arise naturally; rather, it is developed over time. A scaffolding approach is beneficial, beginning with teacher instruction and modelling, then highly structured programmes with tightly prescribed student roles, before finally moving on to more student-led activities.

There is a parallel with student voice here, where we often tend to focus on the moment of self-expression or enactment – the school council meeting or the presentation to staff. But Lundy's (2007) model of student voice emphasises that this moment has to be preceded by a phase of capacity building and followed by some systemic commitment to listen and respond.

The capacity building may involve adults providing input, space, resources and support to help the young people understand the issues and think about possible ways forward, and to develop and test their opinions. Without this, there is a good chance that young people will appear naive or poorly prepared, leading to them being easily dismissed by adults.

In the same way, there is a need for active citizenship projects to build students' capacity for action. But, as with all educational 'scaffolding', there is a balance to be struck between providing guidance to nurture agency and constraining young people so much they remain dependent. As you read these two case studies, you might like to think about these tensions and consider how your students might perform in such tasks.

Case Study 5: Teacher-led project using philanthropy as active citizenship

Contributed by Kirsty White

DESCRIPTION

One of the key areas of Citizenship education needs to be building the skills, and therefore the confidence, of students from the start of their Citizenship education. This example focuses on Year 7, and is an active citizenship advocacy project that uses charity as the vehicle to develop citizenship skills. The main active citizenship activity will be for students to advocate their chosen charity to the class, who will then vote for the charity that the class as a whole will support. Their prior KS3 learning includes learning to speak, listen and articulate their ideas in discussion in the classroom. Human rights and the Rights of the Child learning gives them a basis to argue their points in this project. So, by the time they get here, they have the building blocks for their first piece of advocacy work.

STEP 1: Introduction

I introduce the class to the project, which is going to be a fundraising project where the class decides where the money will go. The first thing they need to understand is what a charity is, so I teach them about that and why different charities might focus on different issues. I also get them to think about the motivation behind the volunteers and others who work for the charity and why they might want to bring about change. So, for example, one person might be very keen to support Macmillan as they have had experience of palliative care and realised that it is a game-changer for patients and their families. Another person might see the impact that the local youth club has on young people in their community and decide to work for a charitable organisation that supports young people. I get the students to mind-map possible charities that they could support in small groups of their choice and with a maximum of four students. This number seems to be important as, otherwise, group tasks are not easily split and you get the risk of students just hanging on and not contributing to the work of the group. From experience, pairs and threes are most effective, but how you facilitate group work really depends on the working space and seating arrangements in your classroom. The mini conversations at this point are important, as they allow students to practise their persuasive language and reasoning with each other as they share ideas.

STEP 2: Mind-map

Using the mind-map to guide them, I get the students to work together to research the work of their possible charities. This works best if each student has access to the internet and can share their findings in a shared workspace such as Google Classroom. Contributing to shared note-making spaces and documents builds that team dynamic and allows everyone to see and interact with the team contributions. Finally, I allow students time to come to a consensus and decide which charity they will advocate to the rest of the class.

STEP 3: Presentation preparation

This is where the first assessment point is built in. Working together with the students as a class, I help them to decide what needs to be in the presentation and how individuals can be assessed. This assessment may be based on several things, such as the content and clarity of the presentation, the speaking skills of the presenter and the evidence of teamwork, but it is important to engage in this process as a class, because this makes it easier during the debriefing and evaluation process. I find it useful to restrict the presentations to a maximum of three minutes, and if using PowerPoint, etc., then restrict to five slides. It's helpful to tell students that slides need not be full of information, just key points and memorable images related to the charity, including logos, etc. I also outline what should be included in the presentation. Since the class may not have heard of the charity a particular group of students is advocating for, it is important for students to answer the 'who', 'what', 'why', 'how', 'where' and 'when' of the charity.

STEP 4: Voting explanation

Before the presentation, I explain to the class that we will be voting for the best ones. Some students will realise that if we use 'first-past-the-post', the biggest groups are more likely to win. So for this, we use STV – single transferable vote – and set up ballot papers with the names of each charity (not the team names or student names) and a box to write the order of preference in. This can be copied six/eight times on an A4 printout and cut up.

REFLECTION

When I consider the sorts of skills that students learn during this project, they are wide-ranging. By giving students the autonomy to work together in teams, they develop skills of collaboration and decision-making. Their communication skills are built upon as they learn to inform others' opinions. By acting as a facilitator in this activity rather than teaching and directing every aspect of it, the students have their own autonomy. The group dynamic develops as they find out more about the topic that they have decided to research and investigate. They become more engaged and invested in the charity than they would if I had given them a range of different case studies to choose from. They have ownership and, in that, their persuasion is more authentic. This in turn makes the project more democratic. As I have also included a voting activity, this further enhances their citizenship knowledge. I believe that in enabling children to develop these active citizenship skills very early on, you build the foundation for an impactful secondary Citizenship programme.



Case Study 6: Student-led active citizenship

Contributed by Aroosa Azam

DESCRIPTION

The Year 7, 8 and 9 students at my school are all required to carry out a research project as part of the Key Stage 3 Citizenship curriculum. The project is set as a homework-based assignment with a four-to-five-week period to complete and a five-minute presentation each term. I let students choose for themselves whether they want to complete this individually or as a team of no more than three students. If they decide to participate as a team, they are allowed to select their teammates and will often resort to friendship groups to do this. While I have found that this can be distracting and challenging for some groups of students, it is the more favourable option, given that students can complete part of this project over the school holidays and may feel uncomfortable spending time outside of the classroom with unfamiliar peers. Additionally, this can be a successful strategy when students pair with friends that are passionate about the same topics, enabling them to collaborate effectively. That said, I suggest that teachers use their intuition and exercise their authority to veto any groups that they think are unsuitable or unlikely to work.

After I set students the assignment, I give each of them a presentation that guides them through the key elements of the project. This includes what their research project should look like (a structure encompassing an introduction, context, examples, reasoning and conclusion) and the scope of technology that the students are allowed to use. In recent years, I have allowed students to use technology, such as a PowerPoint presentation and/or videos to support their project, while also encouraging them to move away from reliance on these. Many students create paraphernalia to support their ideas and display them with pride during their presentations. For example, two students created protest signs for and against the tradition of the monarchy in UK society and the British political system, which supported their reasoning from multiple perspectives.

I instruct the students to select a topic or societal issue that interests them and that they think is important for citizens. I also provide them with a guide of citizenship topics, some of which link to the topics they have been learning about in class. Students are welcome to use these or investigate their own citizenship-based passions. This allows the students to develop autonomy in a structured manner, while providing them with a framework they can use. It is a guided way of 'releasing the reins' as it were. The framework is an important and valuable source of guidance that enables the students to obtain both agency and a scaffold upon which to curate their research project and ultimately a successful presentation.

Throughout this process, I schedule about 10 minutes during each class to check in with students to review their progress. This ensures that students develop key skills such as teamwork, organisation, research and communication over the course of the project.

During week one, I review the students' choice of topics to ensure that these are both appropriate and linked to Citizenship education. During week two, I review the students' proposals, processes and stages of research. During week three, I provide feedback on the sources used by the students and provide them with guidance on the direction of their research project and/or presentation. This entire process can be repeated if/where necessary, depending on the needs of the students. It is important that the class is given an organised schedule or a timeline of tasks needed to complete each stage of the project. The final task involves students presenting their work to the class. Students are assessed for their oracy skills and must achieve an assessment grade in order to pass.

REFLECTION

While this approach might seem less 'active' than other projects involved in fundraising and/or lobbying MPs, it builds the key skills needed for effective Citizenship education. It allows students to figure out what they feel passionate about and to develop the skills needed to take further action. They learn how to carry out research, work as part of a team (if working in a group), delegate responsibility, organise, present and advocate for a cause. This type of citizenship project enables students to create change by educating others or tackling the need to raise awareness, rather than enacting change through protest. Such an approach could be improved by carving out time and opportunities for students to carry out more active projects based on their presentations. Finally, in terms of differentiation, it is not the most SEND-friendly project, especially for students who struggle with public speaking or anxiety. For such students, I suggest that teachers make provisions and allow them to present another time on a 1:1 basis rather than in front of the class.

Points for reflection

- Do you think your students would have the capacity to undertake these projects as they are described? Do you think you would offer more or less freedom?
- What problems, if any, could you foresee in running such projects?
- Can you think of the next step for these projects – how could you run a similar project with more student autonomy?
- To what extent do you agree that these are examples of active citizenship?



How should we judge the success or failure of an active citizenship project?

Does engaging in active citizenship always mean bringing about positive change? Not necessarily – engaging in active citizenship is not so much about causing social or political change, but rather developing interest in doing so, and coming to understand yourself as a citizen with the agency and knowledge to bring about change. Active citizenship should be viewed as a process through which valuable learning can take place, independent of the external change that is secured or not.

Often, success or failure is linked to the impact of a project, or the extent to which aims and goals were met, rather than what was learned and how learning was applied through the process. This is explored in more detail in the section on measuring impact on page 82 of this guide.

On the one hand, we want students to undertake actions they care about, and we want them to want to secure change – this is a crucial element in nurturing active citizens. But on the other hand, the main role of the school is to secure learning, not to effect wide societal change, especially in relation to politically contested issues (Jensen and Schnack, 1994). It is important, therefore, to adopt a ‘process-focused’ approach to active citizenship – that is, to focus on the journey as well as, or in preference to, focusing on the outcome.

As with everything we have said so far, though, there is a balance to be struck, as constantly being rebuffed by adults, ignored by decision-makers or defeated by opponents may well end up undermining students’ sense of agency. Dewey (1997/1938) has good advice here, noting that all experiences are valuable insofar as they enable us to learn and grow in wisdom. Failure can be valuable and productive, but it can also spell trouble if it closes off students from further learning. The teacher must be alert to the difference between failed projects from which learning can be achieved and others that seem to close off future learning because students become despondent or feel there is nothing more to learn or that this is simply not for them.

Case Study 7: Recycling – failure and success

Contributed by Daryl Henson

DESCRIPTION

Following a classroom discussion, my students unanimously decided that their active citizenship campaign should focus on recycling at the school level and with the aim of installing paper and plastic recycling bins at key sites around the school. They noted that there was a lack of recycling facilities in the canteen and around the school more generally. Following their initial research, students learned that, on average, 400 plastic bottles were sold in the canteen throughout each day, meaning that 2,000 plastic bottles were not being recycled each week.

The students pursued their research independently but were required to check in with me at regular intervals to ensure that they were making progress. This also gave me the opportunity to ask them questions and to encourage them to reflect on their project. After a mid-point review, students then investigated the fact that no paper was recycled by teachers. Students decided to write a letter and to request a meeting with the headteacher to raise their concerns. They also met with the catering team and got in touch with local councillors to let them know about their project. Their next action involved contacting MPs to ask whether school recycling facilities were a matter that concerned either the Department for Environment or the Department for Education.

Unfortunately, the cost of recycling facilities within school, alongside the collection of materials, meant that students were unable to make a permanent change in school. However, the campaign allowed students to persuade some members of staff to have their own waste collection trays for paper, while they also worked with a head of year to collect several waste bags of plastic bottles that were then recycled independently.

REFLECTION

It is important to understand that a successful citizenship campaign can be measured across multiple levels. While the students did not achieve their initial goal of installing recycling facilities in the school, they did raise awareness among their peers and the adults around them about the lack of recycling facilities at school. They also developed key active citizenship skills. Students learned to appreciate the importance of teamwork, advocacy and communication in bringing about change. They also realised the importance of planning and collaboration. Where students planned appropriately, in terms of assigning roles and areas of strength, the project was able to move at a quicker pace. Students who felt more comfortable using ICT skills and questionnaire design excelled in this particular field, and those who felt that verbal communication in terms of data collection was their strength also succeeded. Students reflected that had they not planned their choice of groupings, and indeed their skill sets, their projects would have stalled. This is not to say that they did not deviate from initial plans. On the contrary, students correctly identified that their step-by-step plan needed to be adapted as and when it was needed. In this respect, the project was a success.

Points for reflection

- How do you talk to students about success and failure in achieving their objectives and the learning that can be gained through either?
- Do you have any experiences of students learning lots from a failed project? How did they stay focused and reflect on their learning?
- Do you have any experiences of students learning little from a highly successful project? If so, what went wrong in relation to the learning?



Summary

Rather than trying to strike the perfect balance in one active citizenship experience or project, the answer lies in a coherently planned curriculum and long-term vision for Citizenship. A progressive and coherent curriculum helps to ensure that students engage in a variety of types and approaches to taking democratic action, as well as experiencing a variety of roles. This approach also enables students to learn a variety of lessons about being an active citizen. A long-term vision for Citizenship is the subject of the next section.

02

Long-Term Planning for Active Citizenship



Thinking about progression over time

Active citizenship is a capacity that builds over time. It is important to plan over the whole school journey, and to acknowledge that while some of that journey will be based in explicit Citizenship lessons, there are many other projects and experiences that will contribute to this capacity.

It is useful to differentiate between the Citizenship curriculum and the total curriculum experience, which includes whole-school initiatives (such as student voice/student council) and extra-curricular activities (such as volunteering, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, eco-schools, etc.). Students build their capacity through all these opportunities.

Case Study 8: The Oakham School connected curriculum

Adapted from ACT's case study of Oakham School

Oakham School is a large private boarding school in Rutland. While it is not typical, its characteristics have enabled it to undertake some interesting development work in connecting up students' experiences across the life of the school and providing a coherent account of learning.

The connected curriculum includes:

- the formal taught curriculum: including the Humanities, Citizenship, Politics, the International Baccalaureate and the Middle Years Programme
- the pastoral curriculum: including tutorial time and PSHE
- the co-curriculum (extra-curricular activities): including a variety of sports, volunteering, trips, clubs and societies

In order to facilitate conversations with students about how these elements connect up to a total educational experience, each of these curricula are mapped against five learning areas:

- 1 Communication
- 2 Research
- 3 Thinking
- 4 Self-management
- 5 Social skills

Students are given opportunities to self-assess their capacity in each area and are helped to draw up action plans to address weaknesses and build a more balanced holistic profile. Active citizenship in the school can be described using these learning areas, and students can be helped to choose appropriate projects in light of their reviews and plans.

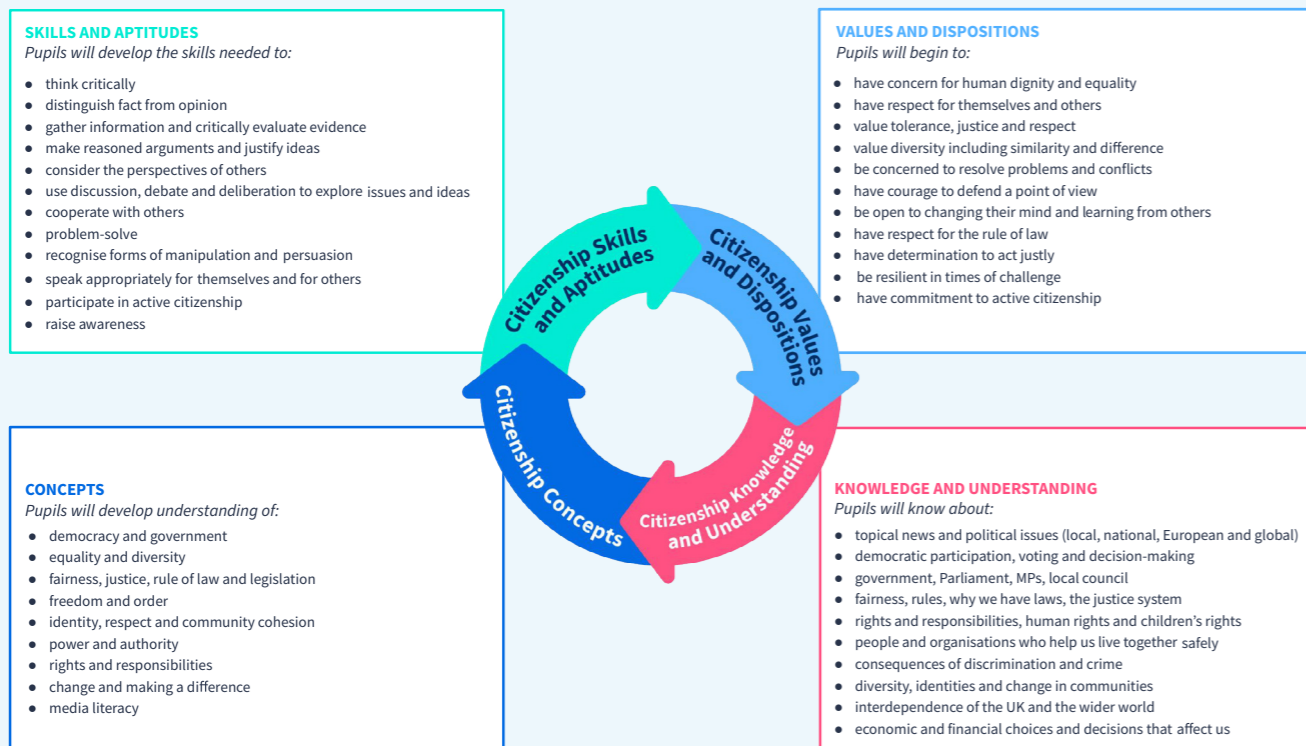
Horizontal and vertical development

The spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960) is often used when illustrating the idea that a good curriculum journey revisits key concepts and processes in order to consolidate prior learning and deepen students’ understanding of core concepts, as well as to provide opportunities to practise and develop key skills.

However, as well as revisiting familiar concepts and skills repeatedly to deepen students’ development, teachers can also broaden the curriculum experience. Some writers (e.g. Ireland and Mouthaan, 2020; Walker, 2020) have made a distinction between subjects that can be thought of as vertical (such as Maths), where the same ideas are revisited and deepened and where earlier ideas provide the foundation for later stages, and those that are more horizontal (such as Humanities), where progress often involves simply learning additional or alternative viewpoints. For example, progress in Sociology might mean looking at the same institution (e.g. the family) from different ideological standpoints (functionalism, feminism, symbolic interactionism, etc.). It’s most beneficial to consider that active citizenship involves both horizontal and vertical forms of progression.

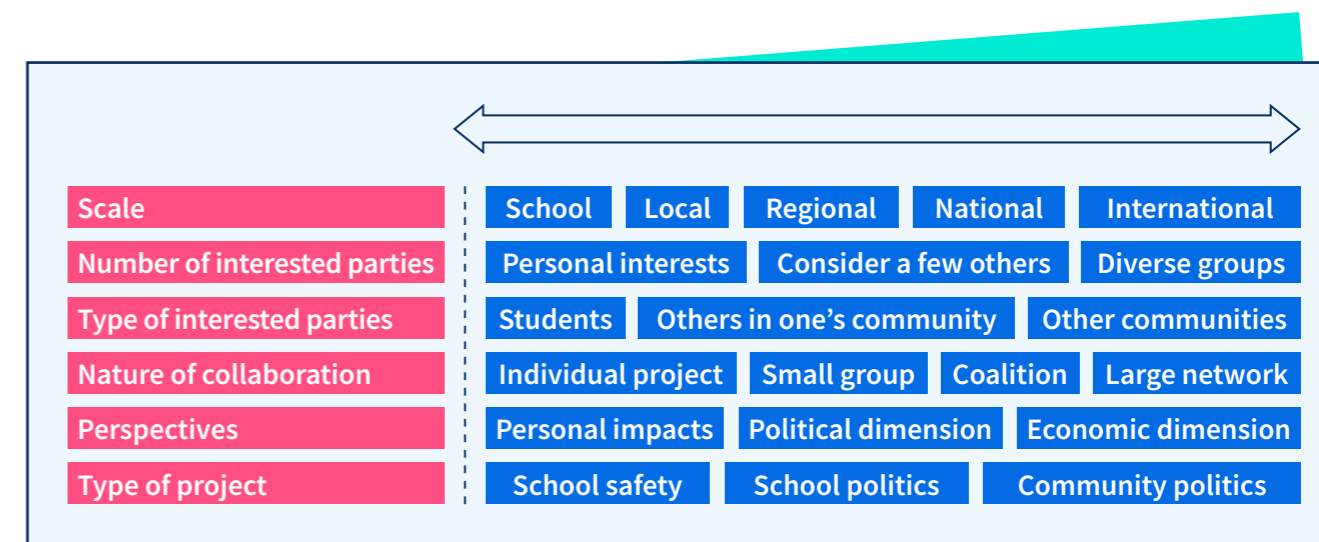
Vertical progression describes the spiral curriculum approach – revisiting core concepts and processes. It’s tricky to provide a definitive account of these, as they differ between exam boards, syllabi and in different versions of the national and school-specific curriculum. The key point is to agree what they are in your school so you can consciously use and reuse them in your planning and teaching. Figure 1 provides a good starting point for the kinds of key ideas that might provide a reasonable spiral frame for your curriculum.

Figure 1: Building students’ capacity for active citizenship through vertical development
(From the ACTive Citizenship Award Teacher Guide, 2023)



Horizontal progression describes the process whereby we add a variety of types of experience, in different contexts, with different interested parties, to enable students to develop a much broader understanding of how to become active citizens. Figure 2 illustrates some of the dimensions that might be considered. As the options move from left to right, they are not necessarily better or worse or more or less challenging; they are simply different types of active citizenship experiences. The more variety encountered, the broader the students’ appreciation of active citizenship.

Figure 2: Building students’ capacity for active citizenship through horizontal development



The research suggests that such experiences are additive, so students continue to reap the benefits of their experience, regardless of how many projects they have already completed (Jerome *et al.*, 2022a). There is also evidence that having such experiences throughout one’s time in school helps to secure a longer-lasting impact into adulthood, and those who participate more in school are more likely to continue as active citizens (Keating and Janmaat, 2016).

Starting the journey

Decisions about starting points and the types of projects likely to be most beneficial have to be grounded in the teacher's knowledge about their students and the communities where they live. Research shows that many different types of projects will be useful, but that it is important to connect them to where students are at, in terms of their level of knowledge, interest and motivation.

While charitable giving can be seen as fairly restricted, it may be a good starting point if young people in your school are deeply affected by an issue. If they struggle to engage with distant political debates, then a school-specific change action might be better as a starting point than a more overtly political campaign. If relationships in your class are fractious, then individual actions (or short, guided collaborative projects) may be better than open-ended group actions as a starting point. This kind of responsive pedagogy is at the heart of active citizenship in schools.

It will also be useful to use assessments to help students think about their strengths and weaknesses, and how subsequent experiences might help to build on the former and tackle the latter. Using some simple assessment profiles can help students to focus on their learning, but also help the teacher to select/shape project teams and decide on the levels of support that might be needed.

Points for reflection

- Have you already got a clearly articulated statement about your Citizenship learning journey, including active citizenship?
- If so, how does it connect to your school aims and values overall?
- How well do you connect the opportunities for active citizenship into a coherent programme?



Planning for skills development

It is essential to develop an overarching plan of the active citizenship journey you want your students to take. This will include a variety of skills, experiences and knowledge that is much broader than any single project could include. However, the students encounter this overarching journey one step at a time, through individual units, projects and extra-curricular experiences.

Many active citizenship skills are generic, but have to be applied in Citizenship contexts. This means we can audit prior experiences to help students build consciously on prior experiences elsewhere in and beyond school:

- research skills
- interpersonal communication skills (e.g. helping others, working with others, developing empathy)
- reflection to arrive at insights
- organisational skills/planning

Some skills might be more explicitly associated with Citizenship:

- advocacy/taking action (focus on attitudinal and competence)
- democratic skills to support potential action (e.g. public speaking, persuasive argument, chairing meetings, organising events/campaigns)

It is helpful if teachers have some model of progression in mind that they can use to inform their planning and that can be shared with students. This enables everyone to be involved in monitoring progress.

There are many different approaches available to draw inspiration from. It is useful to devise your own resources, or at least find some that work for you. There are some examples on the following pages to illustrate how this might be done.

The first two examples (Figures 3 and 4) are from the IB Middle Years Programme, where each skill is broken down into a mark scheme (0–8). The language is fairly generic, relying on changing adjectives to demonstrate progress (e.g. limited/adequate/suitable/detailed).

Figure 3: Organisation and planning for an active citizenship project

LEVEL	DESCRIPTOR
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not achieve a standard described by any of the descriptors below
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a limited plan for research but evidence of planning is limited, leading to deadlines/aims not being met Developed a limited plan for action but evidence of planning is limited, leading to deadlines/aims not being met
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed an adequate plan for research, which is evidenced Developed an adequate plan for action, which is evidenced
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a suitable plan for research, which is evidenced and met the needs of the action Developed a suitable plan for action, which is evidenced and met the needs of the action
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a detailed, appropriate and evidenced plan of action, which they have flexed as necessary to stay on track to meet the needs of the action

(Based on the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme rubrics)

Figure 4: Advocacy/taking action (focus on attitudinal and competence)

LEVEL	DESCRIPTOR
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students did not achieve a standard described by any of the descriptors below
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated limited commitment to the action element Demonstrated limited thinking skills and relied on direction by others Demonstrated limited self-management skills
3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated an adequate commitment to elements of the action Demonstrated adequate thinking skills but often worked with others Demonstrated adequate self-management skills
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated substantial commitment to the action Demonstrated substantial thinking skills and at times worked independently on aspects that contributed to the action Demonstrated substantial social and communication skills
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated excellent commitment to the action without dominating Demonstrated excellent thinking skills and at times worked independently on aspects that contributed to the project Demonstrated excellent social and communication skills

(Based on the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme rubrics)

The next example (Figure 5) is taken from the national curriculum attainment target within the curriculum that ran from 2007 to 2014. The level descriptors are much longer, and the table focuses on those statements that are most explicitly linked to understanding in Citizenship and active citizenship.

Figure 5: Developing as active citizens

LEVEL	DESCRIPTOR
Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They take part in some of the decisions that affect them and their communities
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They describe how things might be improved through the actions that they or others might take
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They identify what could be done to change things in communities and plan some action They take part in decision-making activities with others on Citizenship issues, in contexts that are familiar to them
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They work together with others to plan and undertake a course of action to address significant Citizenship issues They begin to explain different ways in which people can participate in democracy through individual and collective actions and how they can change things in communities and wider society They show understanding of democracy by making connections with their knowledge and experience of representation and taking action in the local community
Level 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They work collaboratively with others from the wider community, to negotiate, plan and carry out action aimed at making a difference to the lives of others and explain the impact of actions taken They participate effectively in activities involving representation, voting and campaigning on issues they have explored
Level 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They negotiate their role, and plan and undertake courses of action with others They reflect on the extent of their success in achieving an improvement or influence in the community and suggest what they might do next
Level 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They work with others to initiate, negotiate, plan and carry out appropriate courses of action in the local and wider community to bring about change They begin to evaluate the roles citizens can take in shaping decisions and the extent to which they can influence the operation of political and legal systems
Level 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They carry out different types of research and hypothesise alternative courses of action, exploring the different implications of each They put some of these courses of action to the test in their communities and analyse and draw conclusions about the impact and limitations of these They understand how citizens participate in bringing about change in society through democratic processes and different kinds of action

(Extracts from the level descriptors for Citizenship in the national curriculum, 2008)

In 2014, the curriculum was reviewed and the detailed attainment target level descriptors were replaced with a single attainment target. Schools were encouraged to develop their own systems for judging progress. The next example (Figure 6) is taken from ACT’s guidance for teachers on possible ways forward, where the levels were replaced with three broad judgments – working towards/at/beyond. Rather than break the skills down into separate elements, these extracts are more holistic descriptions of how well students can engage in the whole active citizenship cycle.

Figure 6: Understanding and taking democratic action

WORKING TOWARDS	WORKING AT	WORKING BEYOND
Students make reasonable suggestions in support of possible action, making limited use of knowledge of the context. They can work with others, undertaking agreed-upon roles. They can also identify ways in which an action was successful or not and suggest some reasons.	Students are able to analyse a situation and propose and defend a proposed action in relation to contextual factors and clear aims. They can also plan and organise action with others and work with others to implement their plans, using time and resources appropriately. They can evaluate the process to identify learning (e.g. personal or political learning).	Students demonstrate creativity and flexibility in identifying possible action, which shows a thorough understanding of the context. They work well with others, adopting leadership and collaborative skills as required. They are able to reflect on their actions as they work and adapt their plans to changing circumstances.

(From ACT’s curriculum briefing on assessment and progression in Citizenship, 2014)

The final example (Figure 7) is taken from ACT’s curriculum briefing, Assessing Citizenship in Secondary Schools (2023). This was written by a practitioner in a multi-academy trust and reflects some of the practices they have developed across their trust for assessment in all subjects. It blends the various approaches in the previous examples.

Figure 7: Active citizenship at KS3

EMERGING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to list why their issue is important and how it links to Citizenship concepts
DEVELOPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to list why their issue is important and describe the action they have taken
ACHIEVING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to list why their issue is important and describe the action they have taken They will explain the planning and impact of the action with clear reference to wider Citizenship concepts
EXCEEDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to provide convincing reasons for the importance of their action They are able to explain the stages they have gone through to reach their outcome They are able to critically explore the success and failures of the project
EXCELLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students critically approach all aspects of their project They analyse the approaches, concepts and outcomes of the action they take They critically use research to underpin their work and are mindful of wider issues in society outside the scope of their project

(Extract from Assessing Citizenship in Secondary Schools, 2023)

While such assessment rubrics are always rather general, they do serve a useful purpose in defining what a successful outcome looks like. If they are subsequently broken down into stages or levels, then they also serve a secondary purpose in helping teachers pitch their teaching and plan for progression. A third purpose is that they can be used by students to help them reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and take some responsibility for making improvements.

Building skills over time

When considering how these skills can be built over time, it might be beneficial to consider a ‘full’ model of active citizenship that includes all the stages as follows:



These reflect the seven steps in ACT’s Active Citizenship Toolkit Teacher’s Guide:



Whilst Citizenship teachers often have the full process in mind when they think of a classic active citizenship project, this does take a significant amount of time and may also be demanding if students lack familiarity with several steps of the process. It’s important to think about how the curriculum builds students’ skills relevant to each step, and their capacity to complete each activity increasingly independently.

This can be done as distinct mini-projects or tasks and by combining different steps across your long-term planning.

Example: Planning, getting ready and justifying action (Step 5)

Present students with a context and ask them to choose between options for different actions. For example, if teaching about the civil rights movement in the USA, you might choose to focus on 1967, when Martin Luther King launched a campaign for the redistribution of resources (the Poor People’s Campaign). One of the teachers involved in the production of this guide has taught about the Bristol Bus Boycott in 1955, when people from the West Indies were discriminated against by the local bus company and trade union. Students could consider the scenario and what possible forms of active citizenship might be most suitable to challenge this discrimination.

The testing of each suggestion, to explore the risks and potential benefits, should help to exemplify how to build a strong rationale for action. This shifts the focus away from the specific action (such as marches, demonstrations, voter registration drives, boycotts, etc.) and towards a political explanation of how the action might lead to the desired change. This kind of activity can be formulated for any contemporary issue/organisation that students have become familiar with. There are some exemplar resources in the ‘Deliberative Classroom’ pack on creating change in democracy, which focus on three issues: the suffragettes, animal rights activists and anti-fascists.

Example: Putting plan into action (Step 6)



In general terms, teachers are rightly sceptical of simply recruiting students to complete an action that other people have designed. Hart (1992) has argued that this can be little more than tokenism or manipulation. However, if children are consulted and fully informed, and exercise free choice over their participation, then this can be a powerful way to build routines of participation and promote a sense of efficacy. For example, an Amnesty International group undertaking an Amnesty action does not require students to devise or justify an appropriate action, but can be powerful in building a sense of efficacy and may contribute to positive outcomes for individuals, if enough people support the campaign for long enough.

Example: Choosing issue; researching issue and actions; choosing actions; planning, getting ready and justifying actions



The IB Middle Years Programme provides a structure in which students can identify an issue of concern, research the issue to explore it in greater depth and start to identify the problem that needs to be addressed. This is used as the starting point for an action plan, in which students have to construct and test a rationale for their action, justifying it in terms of how likely it would be to succeed and how achievable it might be in practice. The students are not required to implement the action, but the planning process provides a powerful opportunity to develop students' skills and capacity for understanding active citizenship. This would be a useful project to undertake in Year 9 before students embark on a full active citizenship project for GCSE, with the teacher using the assessment of the planning project to inform grouping and support plans.

Points for reflection



- Do you have an agreed account of active citizenship skills?
- If so, does this account run through your planning, teaching and assessment practices clearly? And would students and other staff members know what they were?
- If not, review your projects and schemes of work to try to identify what they might be.

Planning for knowledge and understanding

Knowledge about an issue or context

Students are generally planning to undertake action in relation to a specific issue and/or context. If the proposed action is to be realistic, then they usually engage in some form of inquiry so they can identify something that needs to be changed or challenged, and propose a realistic outcome.

Although students' views on active citizenship and topics of importance are often linked to areas of knowledge and understanding they have covered in class, they can also be triggered by external events or news – perhaps local, school-based or societal issues, or a desire to contribute to an existing campaign. Depending on the context and the topic of choice, varying levels of further knowledge and understanding development will be required.

If they are undertaking an action project in their own school, then they can probably draw on shared knowledge in the class, but they may still need to develop their understanding further through research or consultation with peers (there are some further ideas about this in the next section).

If they are engaging in their own individually determined projects that engage with wider societal issues and campaigns, then there may be a substantial amount of knowledge to be established. This is likely to be project-specific and so may be difficult to plan for over an extended time.

Figure 8 provides an example of a student reflection on their devised project, highlighting different types of knowledge. This example includes specific facts about the context for the action, links to broader Citizenship concepts, and a contextualised understanding of their projected impact.



Figure 8: Example of a GCSE group's reflection on their developing project proposal

We have chosen to campaign for girls' netball in Eswatini. **Girls' human rights in Eswatini are not as they should be, with the High Court having to rule that the common law doctrine of martial power was unconstitutional. This is because it discriminates against women and denies their constitutional right to equality.** With this campaign, we can support this ruling and make sure it is put into effect. **This is shown as incidents of gender-based violence persisting, and one in three women had experienced such abuse by the age of 18; 48% of women reported having experienced some form of sexual violence. COVID-19 lockdown measures hindered survivors' access to support services and justice mechanisms and increased the risk of violence.**

To help us with this, we planned primary research, interviewing the main organiser of the girls' netball in Eswatini project. One of the questions we asked was: "The project is led by women, can you help us to better understand why this is important?" **Women as a marginalised group have a low social standing, with them often providing for their families. This also involves providing food and education. Using netball supports skills by helping the girls believe in themselves. Through this, they will develop skills and "use netball as a vehicle so that they can realise this".** The director believes that playing sports is important for young people to keep themselves both busy and healthy; however, sadly women are often excluded, and this use of netball as a 'vehicle' will help them be more involved.

Knowledge of human rights, related legislation in Eswatini and ongoing conflicts

Contemporary factual knowledge about crimes affecting girls in Eswatini

More specific information about the experiences of girls in Eswatini

Understanding about how their planned action might impact on the situation

(Example provided by Viv Lamb, Oakham School)

There are also opportunities to engage with actions after a curriculum-based unit has developed their understanding. Deptford Green School spearheaded this approach under Pete Pattison's guidance, and adopted a 'change action' at the end of every scheme of work (Pattison, 2013). This might be a letter-writing activity, a fundraising push, awareness-raising, lobbying or any other form of action. The main point, from a planning perspective, is that the students ground their action in the understanding that has developed through their prior learning. In this case, the topic-specific learning is strongly directed by the teacher.

Knowledge about Citizenship action

When thinking about students' learning journey overall, it is also useful to think about what they should know about the variety of actions that citizens might adopt in order to improve a situation. It makes little sense to think about this only as a discrete scheme of work to be learned as a one-off at some point, as that leaves no room for students to deepen their understanding. On the one hand, we want them to know that there is a range of actions and what they are. But on the other hand, we want them to think critically about the advantages and disadvantages of each; to assess how each may or may not work in specific situations; and to devise strategies that are practical within current constraints. This suggests it would be much more useful to return to strategies repeatedly to consider how they have been used and how well they worked, and to build a deeper understanding of how citizens make decisions about the forms of active citizenship they undertake.

Figure 9 provides a list of possible citizen actions taken from one of ACT's 'Deliberative Classroom' resources. In the lesson plan, these are printed on cards and students are encouraged to select the most appropriate types of action to achieve the aims of different case studies. This activity helps students to think about why one might adopt a specific action and reject another, and to develop a contextualised justification. The list could also be used as an audit tool to review what forms of active citizenship you cover most across your schemes of work, and which remain unmentioned or relatively undeveloped.

Figure 9: Basic forms of actions that constitute active citizenship

Voluntary work

Find an organisation that is directly helping people or dealing with this issue and volunteer to help them. E.g. If you're worried about poverty, help with a food bank.

Direct action

Just do whatever needs to be done yourself. E.g. If your park is run down and dirty, go and clean it up.

Vigilantism

Take responsibility for your own security. E.g. If the streets in your neighbourhood are unsafe, set up a group to monitor those streets to protect people.

Donating money

Give money to an organisation that is dealing with the problem you have identified. E.g. If you're worried that homeless people are in danger during the winter, donate to a shelter or soup kitchen.

Signing a petition

It's quick and easy to sign your name or click a petition on the internet. E.g. The website '38 Degrees' has petitions on all sorts of things.

Express solidarity

Sometimes it's useful just to let activists and campaigners know that you appreciate what they are doing and are thinking of them. E.g. Write a letter to someone who is campaigning for LGBT rights in Uganda under the threat of violence.

Voting

Once you are old enough to vote in elections, vote for a party or candidate who supports the kind of causes you think are important.

Wearing a badge and raising awareness

Just putting a badge on your school bag lets people know you support a cause. E.g. People changed their Facebook photo to a French flag when the Paris bombings took place.

Lobbying

Contact someone in power to ask them to support your cause or take specific action. E.g. Write to your local MP or go to meet them in their local surgery.

Local political party

Join the local branch of a political party and help them to drum up support. E.g. Attend meetings, deliver leaflets, knock on doors to let people know what the party is doing.

Boycott

If you don't agree with a company or policy, don't give them your support, time or money. E.g. Avoid companies that don't pay workers the Living Wage or don't buy from companies that sell fur.

Occupation

Take over a space to protest. E.g. The Occupy movement took over the square outside St Paul's Cathedral in London to draw attention to inequalities and the power of big business.

Sabotage and disruption

Stop people doing what you disagree with. E.g. Animal rights protestors sabotage hunts to prevent animal cruelty.

Sharing information

Do your bit to spread the word about a campaign or a problem to encourage others to think about it and possibly get involved. E.g. Put up posters or give a talk in assembly.

Marching and protesting

Go out and march to let the world know there are lots of people who agree with the cause. E.g. Young people protesting against student loans by marching near Parliament.

Standing for election

Can't find a political party or candidate to support in an election? Stand yourself and try to change things. E.g. Martin Bell OBE stood because he wanted to teach his local MP a lesson and won!

Judicial review or fighting a legal case

If you think the Government is being unfair, take them to court. E.g. Group together with other campaigners to fundraise for a legal action – they can be expensive.

Refuse to comply

If you think a rule is wrong, refuse to follow it – you have to be prepared for the consequences though. E.g. People refused to pay the poll tax because they thought it was unfair and were sent to prison.

Hacktivism

Get into someone's website and disrupt their business. E.g. The group Anonymous undermined ISIS's website by replacing propaganda videos with adverts for Viagra!

Humour

Make people look silly in an attempt to undermine their position and discourage others from supporting them. E.g. Put on a comedy show about someone to turn them into a laughing stock.

Forcing the legal system to confront injustices

Do something deliberately to get into trouble with the law so that you can have your day in court. E.g. People trespass on airport runways to protest about the pollution caused by the expansion of airports and air travel.

Political violence towards civilians

Deliberately set out to use violence against other citizens. E.g. Beat up people who wear fur.

Political violence towards the authorities

Deliberately set out to use violence against the police or Government. E.g. The IRA bombed Parliament.

Riots

Protest where the anger and confrontation leads to people destroying buildings and businesses. E.g. Some of the protesters involved in marching against the increase in university tuition fees rioted.

(Extract from ACT's 'Deliberative Classroom' Resource: Democracy, Protest and Change)

Political analysis/framing the Citizenship issue

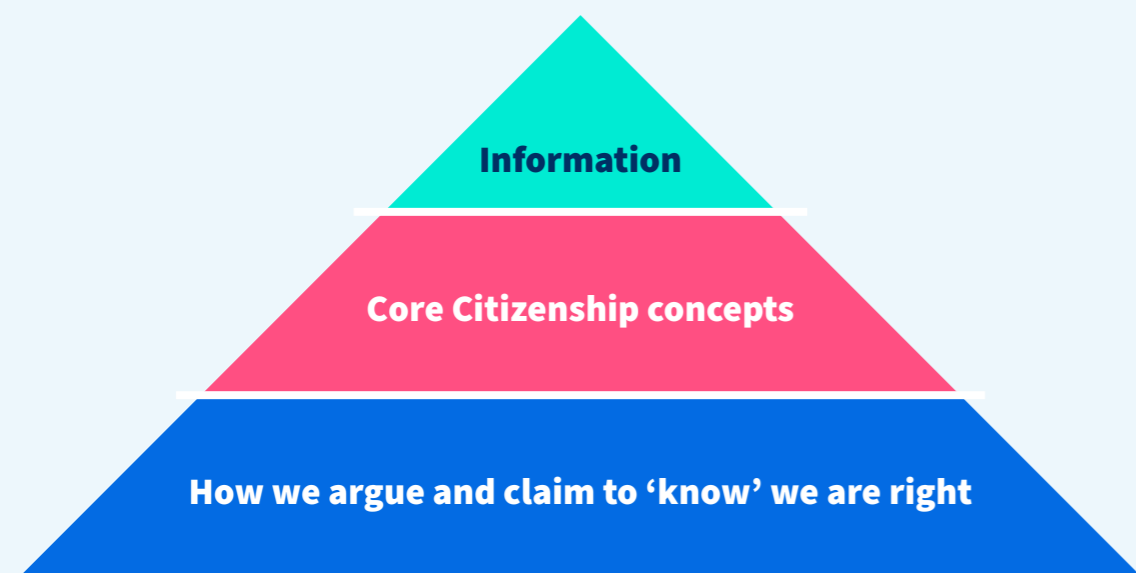
So far, the kind of knowledge discussed has related to the first two layers of the 3D model of Citizenship knowledge (Figure 10). We have discussed information about the specific contexts, issues and actions, and conceptual knowledge in relation to underlying concepts such as human rights or what constitutes effective action in a specific context.

However, there is also a deeper form of understanding to be gained, relating to students developing a sense of how to frame an issue politically and how to make a politically informed decision about what to do.

Rowe's (2005) research into how students understand conflicts suggested that one of the hallmarks of mature political thinking is the ability to understand a problem from different perspectives. Partly this is the ability to understand that other people have different views about an issue, not because they have access to different information but because they have a different worldview or emphasise different values. Understanding these differences and acknowledging the legitimacy of various positions is the beginning point for a political understanding.

This is also in part about understanding that the same issue can be seen through different lenses. For example, climate change can be seen as a scientific or geographical issue, a social justice or ethical challenge, a question of personal or collective responsibilities, and from an economic or political perspective. Each approach enables a different framing of the issue, poses different questions and ultimately suggests different types of responses. The ultimate question of what should be done in the face of climate change will be better answered if all these perspectives are accounted for and a well-informed personal judgement is developed.

Figure 10: 3D model of Citizenship knowledge



(Adapted from Jerome, 2017)

In a similar research project, Jerome and Lalor (2020) asked students of different ages to analyse and solve a school-based problem. This work aimed to explore how students of different ages (10 to 18 years) thought about their own agency in relation to decisions that affected them. Their answers fell into five categories, reflecting a growing level of sophistication:

- (i) Pre-political thinking:** This was evident when students assumed that people would desist from decisions that affected them adversely if only they knew how the children thought. This ignores the fact that people have different interests.
- (ii) Vicarious action:** This was evident in students whose main response was to ask adults to resolve the problem for them, avoiding personal agency altogether (apart from making one's opinion known).
- (iii) Direct actions (politically naive):** This was evident in students who felt they would have to influence individual people in the way they influenced members of their own family. This ignores the fact that people have roles to play and represent institutional interests.
- (iiib) Direction actions (politically literate):** These answers began to demonstrate a basic level of competence in suggesting actions that might reasonably be expected to have an impact on those with authority to make decisions. These actions included several of those listed in Figure 9.
- (iv) Chains of influence:** These reflected a more sophisticated approach – building coalitions to enlist more people to the same cause, recognising there is power in numbers when dealing with people in authority.

These ideas are more difficult to measure and more abstract to teach directly, but they are very important in thinking clearly about your long-term planning for active citizenship.

Bringing together knowledge and skills

In the NGO sector, people often use a theory of change model to help pull these various elements together. In educational terms, this is equivalent to moving between the stages/actions and the big picture of the active citizenship project. This is particularly important because active citizenship is more than the sum of these individual skills and bits of knowledge – it requires students to pull elements together into a coherent plan, in which knowledge, skills and attitudes are combined.

Some of this is already reflected in the assessment rubrics listed earlier (in the skills section), but the theory of change can also provide both a useful template to build the big picture and, once it has been articulated, the blueprint for evaluating progress.

There is an example pro forma with prompt questions on page 71 to help students build their own theory of change and think clearly about how their planned actions could realistically contribute to the change they want to see.

Points for reflection

- Review your schemes of work and major active citizenship projects alongside whole-school opportunities to build a profile of the kind of knowledge covered.
- Have you covered the range of types of knowledge discussed here?
- Are there any biases or omissions evident in what is embedded in your work?



Teacher–student relationships to nurture agency

Earlier in this guide, the issue of student agency was addressed and it was argued that teachers should be realistic about balancing teacher and student roles. When planning the whole Citizenship journey across several years, it is important to be more deliberate about planning for changing teacher roles in order to respond to students' level of development and scaffold them towards autonomy.

Developing agency in context

Drawing on the work of Jerome and Starkey (2022), it is useful to think about agency in a number of ways. Fundamentally, agency is a citizen's capacity to undertake action to achieve ends willed by them alone, or in collaboration with others. It can be tempting to think about hierarchical institutions like schools as generally thwarting agency, but it is actually more productive to think about agency as an ecological concept that only really exists in actual contexts and times, with a range of facilitative and restrictive factors in place.

It is important to be pragmatic about what the realistic prospects for active citizenship projects are in your situation. It could be argued that there is always room for some degree of students' agency in schools, and there is often room to develop it at least a bit more than is happening in many schools. Once the school adapts to a certain level of student active citizenship, then the tolerance levels are likely to increase, creating room for subsequent projects to become more expansive or challenging.

Over time and as the school adapts, the contextual factors change:

- ✓ Your students have a more developed range of strategies to employ, enabling them to be more adaptive and inclusive. This is likely to lead them to develop more realistic projects and avoid unnecessary conflict.
- ✓ Your colleagues are likely to become more trusting of participative projects, as they become more accustomed to them. This will encourage them to be less threatened by student actions that might be seen to undermine adult authority.
- ✓ You are likely to become a better facilitator and enabler for the students. This means you will become more adept at clearing the way for and collaborating with them on how to respond to obstacles.
- ✓ The culture of the school may become more open, and eventually teachers and school leaders will come to expect more student engagement.

The following is an example of how a teacher has helped to build a culture of participation across the school, with a diverse range of participative opportunities and activities embedded in all aspects of the school life. By contrast, Sam Mejias (2017) documents a catastrophic failure to embed student voice in a school that rushed into it without laying the foundations, neglecting to build students' capacity and adults' trust. The result was that the scheme was effectively abandoned.

This acts as a reminder that agency must be nurtured over time and developed in your context. It requires careful planning and patience.

Case Study 9: Building a culture of participation in Leeds City Academy

Adapted from ACT's Journeys to Citizenship Education (Jerome et al., 2022b)

Student voice is organised into a number of distinct programmes, which recruit in different ways and involve students in a range of very different activities. This not only creates a diverse range of opportunities, so students should easily find something that appeals to them, but it also means students are actively involved in many different levels of school decision-making.

Student Parliament

An elected body of students is organised into five departments (education, health and wellbeing, conduct, economic growth, and community). Each department is linked with three staff members, and discussions and decisions feed directly into school improvement processes.

Community Impact Leaders

Students apply for these positions, which are linked to the two main neighbourhood areas surrounding the school. Their work links to local charities and organisations to build community cohesion, promote community safety and encourage volunteering and social action.

Culture/Curriculum Coaches

These KS4 positions are allocated by invitation only, as they involve students providing mentoring to younger peers to help build a cohesive community within the school and to support academic attainment.

LCA Pride

Any student can join this LGBTQ+ and allies group. The group is working to achieve the Stonewall School Champion Award and to build an inclusive culture in the school.

Empower Group

This group of female students is recruited by the Year 10 manager and aims to empower young women to take up leadership roles. Students work towards a Level 2 Leadership qualification and have taken a lead on primary transition events.

Raising Aspirations Leaders

This is more focused on involving students in careers education projects and discussions with local employers and FE providers to build a culture of high aspiration in the school.

Progression in agency

One useful way to think about how to support agency over time is to adapt Fisher and Fray's (2013) 'gradual release' framework, where teachers deliberately plan a sequence to transition from teacher-led activities (I do), to shared activities (we do), and finally onto student-led activities (you do) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: The gradual release framework

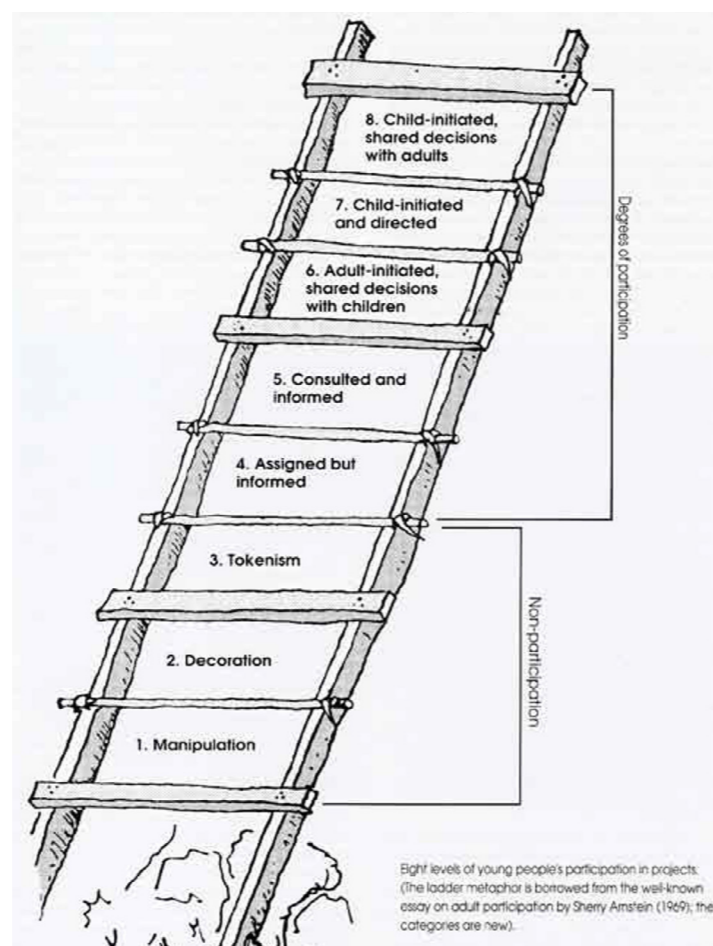
I DO	Teacher leads and students are allocated roles or simply learn from watching/hearing about others' actions (case studies)
	Teacher leads and the student is informed about their role or consulted
WE DO	Teacher acts as a coach and plans action with the student
YOU DO	Student leads with teacher support
	Student initiates action and consults/informs teacher

(Fisher and Fray, 2013)

This has been used in a number of subjects, notably in teaching reading, but it is perfectly applicable to building students' agency in active citizenship projects. Fisher and Fray emphasise that the sequence is useful but the timing and precise roles adopted at any stage need to be finessed in the moment to calibrate teacher support. This is a useful way to think about planning projects gradually over Years 7–11, but with the proviso that some students will be ready for more freedom sooner and others will require support for longer, so there will have to be some further adaptation within those broad stages.

This has some similarity to Hart's (1992) ladder of participation, which is widely used to differentiate between different types of participative opportunity (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Hart's ladder of participation



(Illustration taken from Hart, 1992)

While child-initiated projects sit at the top of Hart's ladder, this does not mean that other forms of participation are not legitimate or are less useful. Only the first three rungs are seen as problematic, as they do not respect children's participation rights at all; rather, they assign them roles and control their participation completely. Hart certainly did not create the ladder with the intention that practitioners would see it as a developmental model or only value the higher rungs. It simply helps the teacher to be aware of what levels of agency (and support) are appropriate in different projects.

It is useful to be able to share this information up front to avoid students assuming they will have more freedom to determine actions than is reasonable. Avoiding unrealistic expectations plays a large part in implementing successful projects, especially where the room for manoeuvre is limited by contextual factors (such as the headteacher being unwilling to engage in discussion of an issue, or the lack of resources to implement a plan).

Measuring agency

In education, it's often lamented that there is a tendency to value what can easily be measured (such as attendance and grades, where hard numbers are easy to come by), but there is a lesser focus on and ability to measure what is really valued (such as relationships, trust and empowerment).

As part of ACT's National Citizenship Education Survey, we have adapted some tried and tested research instruments to enable us to come up with a relatively quick and easy tool to measure agency (Figure 13). In the psychology literature, this is generally referred to as efficacy and then divided into different elements. General efficacy refers to the extent to which students feel in control of their own lives; internal political efficacy refers to the extent to which young people feel they understand and can engage in politics; and external political efficacy refers to the extent to which they feel they and people like them can make a difference.

All such measures can only ever be partial views of complex human attitudes and capacities, but these have been tested and found to be largely reliable, providing relatively stable measures of the underlying quality. Teachers can use measures like this to compare different year groups (the hope would be that older students have higher scores), to compare different sub-groups of students (you might expect those who are more involved in active citizenship to have higher scores) and to identify any groups who seem to score lower (there is a well-evidenced gap between poor and wealthy young people that widens over adolescence).

You can use this short battery of questions for your own evaluation, or you can use ACT's survey and receive a school-specific report of your results.

Figure 13: A quick efficacy measure

1	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
2	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
3	I can remain calm when facing difficulties	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
4	I can usually handle whatever comes my way	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
5	When political issues or problems are being discussed, I usually have something to say	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
6	I am able to understand most political issues easily	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
7	People like me can have a real influence on government if they get involved	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
8	When local people campaign together, they can help to solve problems in their community	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree

■ General efficacy
 ■ Internal political efficacy
 ■ External political efficacy

Extracted from ACT's NCES student survey

Points for reflection

- How well do you think your school is currently doing, in terms of promoting students' agency? To what extent does your answer draw on your own intuitive understanding of the school, and to what extent is there data to draw on?
- Are there schemes of work or projects where you could increase the degree of student agency?
- What are the facilitating factors in your school (and can these be better exploited)? And what are the constraints (and how might these be reduced)?

Building in assessment and evaluation

Previous sections have suggested ways in which you can conceptualise and plan for progression over the long term. This informs your intentions (making sure you are clear on what you are aiming for) and will help you to plan and pitch your teaching. It is also important to incorporate an assessment and evaluation system, so you can form a judgement about what impact you are achieving.

Summative assessment

This section notes that, alongside the assessment rubrics discussed earlier in section 2, you will need to put in place some scheduled activities to judge students' attainment. Some of those rubrics are designed to be used at the end of specific active citizenship projects, whereas others might be best undertaken as annual self-assessments.

Teachers who worked on this handbook devised assessments that included:



Different aspects of active citizenship, including the different dimensions of knowledge, the various skills, and attitudes towards participation. This enabled them to build a holistic view of students' capacity for active citizenship.



Some rather basic and standardised prompts, for example, the routine use of 'What Went Well' (WWW) and 'Even Better If' (EBI). The general advice is that the prompts do not need to be particularly sophisticated, but it is helpful if they are accessible, used frequently and support routines for reflection and self-assessment.



Different sources of assessment, including self-assessment (e.g. checking off definitions they know), peer evaluation and teacher feedback.



Different formats, including pictures, speeches, films and blogs. Teachers' advice was that not everything should end with a piece of formal reflective writing. There are many more engaging and creative ways for students to communicate their experiences and what they learned from them, and we should make those processes as positive and engaging as possible.

Formative assessment

The teachers involved in this project also emphasised the usefulness of building in some routines to support formative assessment. This is important because projects often extend over time, and students need encouragement to monitor their progress and adjust their plans as they go. The planning, implementation and evaluation cycle is not linear – it includes recursive feedback loops as students try out certain activities, encounter real responses and build their understanding.

Formative assessment is simply the way that the students and teachers take stock as they go, so they can make informed decisions to improve their plans.

As with the routines for summative assessment, the advice here is to generally keep things simple and use the same approaches repeatedly to support good learning habits. One useful method is to plan in key milestones to build a record as you go, rather than waiting until the end of a project. Milestone 1 might sit at the end of the research stage and require students to articulate exactly what they think the problem is that they want to tackle. Milestone 2 might be at the end of the planning stage and require students to explain why their plan might reasonably be expected to work (like a theory of change), and to consider how others might perceive this (to develop empathy and understanding of diversity and democratic change).

Answers to these questions can help the teacher make judgments about the depth of students' understanding and adopt appropriate interventions.

As a result of formative assessment, you might adapt:

- ✓ the support you provide individuals to devise realistic plans
- ✓ the time you allocate to different stages
- ✓ the teaching activities you planned for the next stage
- ✓ the learning outcomes, to make them more or less challenging
- ✓ the composition of the student groups
- ✓ your own role in liaising with other adults to facilitate projects

Having predictable times planned to take stock is essential to maximise the chances of success and ensure everyone understands what they are learning.

Points for reflection

- Do you have assessment routines and standard practices to help you, your colleagues and students to build good basic habits for reflection and assessment?
- How well do your planning tools connect to your assessment tools – is there consistent language used in both?



Summary

This section has been about long-term planning and the need to develop an overarching view of the active citizenship journey you want your students to take. This will include a variety of skills, knowledge and types of experiences that is much broader than any single active citizenship project could include. Students encounter this overarching journey one step at a time, through individual units, projects and extra-curricular experiences. There are two practical ways in which you can ensure the students understand how those individual experiences map onto the big picture. First, your assessment system wraps around them to connect these individual experiences back to the students' whole journey towards active citizenship. And second, consciously teaching the connections between the individual units of work and active citizenship projects is important to help students build the bigger picture. The long-term plan provides you with the starting point for your medium-term planning and lesson planning, and enables you to be clear about the significance of each of those smaller elements. How you turn that into engaging and meaningful projects is the subject of the next section.



03

Short-Term Planning for Active Citizenship Projects



Planning active citizenship projects

There is no doubt that when it comes to planning for students to carry out their active citizenship projects, the process and expectations are different to planning a lesson based around core concepts and knowledge. When it comes to planning for these lessons as a teacher, you will find that your role becomes less about leading and more about facilitating, so that you work to support the students to develop their own ideas and activities and reach their end goals.

For those teachers who are new to this role, it can feel daunting to allow classes to have so much control of their learning in your lessons, and it certainly will not happen straight away. The previous section showed the importance of careful planning for progression so that students develop the skills and habits to work in this way. This section will focus on the short-term planning needed to enable these projects to run smoothly lesson by lesson, considering strategies that can be used by teachers and students to adapt their work to ensure the success of the project.

Typology of projects and planning implications

Throughout your time as a teacher of Citizenship, you will have the opportunity to plan for a range of different projects. These can be broken down into clear areas, each of which will require a slightly different form of planning. The typology below (Figure 14) represents a summary of the projects that are likely to be useful in a school or college setting:

Figure 14: Type of project

TYPE	EXAMPLE
Short-term responsive	National or international event: flood, earthquake, war, famine Local event: fire in local community, flood, illness of a child needing support
Short partial projects	Letter-writing to the Government or a charity; taking part in a national organised event; taking part in a simulation – for example, model United Nations, model select committee or parallel election
Full active citizenship project	GCSE projects and student-led campaigns; these could include MP visits, championing a cause they feel strongly about, advocating for change, awareness-raising and community action
Long-term school projects	Run over a series of years, embedded in the school, led by students and handed down from one year group to the next; this could be working with an organisation, working with overseas schools or simply sustaining a distinctive long-term project

While some of the projects above will have planning elements that are similar, there will be distinct differences regarding time to carry out the project, level of response needed, experience of the students you are working with and much more. In order to take this into account, there are a range of considerations for your planning.

Checklists

A good place to start with any project is a simple checklist. The following example has been provided by an experienced member of ACT who has run a range of projects during her teaching career. It is not designed to be followed to the letter, but provides a prompt for teachers to work through with students to make sure you have at least considered key issues (and solutions) in advance.

Active citizenship checklist 1

What are you planning for? Is it to have a successful campaign or for the students to develop the skills of active citizenship? Have similar projects been run in the past, and if so, what were the main lessons learned from those?

What is the scale of impact you want the project to have? School-based, local community, national or international?

Which decision-makers do you have access to? Can you access the SLT, school governors, head of the trust, etc. for school-based projects where students can pitch the ideas to them? Do you have links with the local council or community leaders? Do you have national and international links that would support the project, and if not, do you know where to start looking?

What constraints do you need to plan for? What safeguarding concerns connected to the project do you need to consider? How supportive is your SLT of active citizenship – do you need to mount a ‘charm offensive’? Do you need to submit formal proposals to your SLT for active projects to run? What time constraints do you have for the project? What constraints do you have for the use of ICT? What do your school policies say about students using ICT/social media and safeguarding?

What resources do you have available to you? What budget, if any, can you access to help you with the active project? If there is no budget and you/the students need resources, how will you raise funds to buy things? Do you need access to ICT as part of the project, and if so, how much access do you have?

What is the aim of the project? Do you have a clear aim to create change? Have you created a SMART aim? Is the aim specific, measurable, realistic and time-specific?

What milestones are you planning for to ensure a project is successful? Once you have a project aim, what are the ‘milestones’ that need to be met to ensure the active project is a success? How are you going to check in with those involved in the project to ensure that things are happening and problems are addressed?

What contingencies have you planned for? If the project is not going well, what is your back-up plan? At each stage of the project, have you planned time to discuss and reflect upon what has worked and what hasn’t? What do you need to adapt due to obstacles that you come across? For example, if you have been sending letters to the local MP and invited them in and they haven’t responded, what is your back-up plan? Perhaps you as the teacher may need to book them to visit the school so students can meet with them.

Evaluating and considering the next steps: How successful was the project? What did it achieve? What would you adapt if you did this type of project again? Is there anything from this project that could develop further and become an annual event? How are you going to build upon this project to ensure active citizenship is not tokenistic and to develop the ethos of the school further?

(Contribution from Lorellie Canning)

Here is another simplified and student-friendly planning checklist, which breaks down ‘goals, roles and timescales’ and then ‘steps to success’. This has been taken from the ACTIVE Citizenship Award Key Stage 3 Student Toolkit and can be used to help students to properly consider a variety of factors before engaging in their project. Planning, even when broken down into such simple questions as these, will help the students stay focused on project progress, roles and responsibilities.

Active citizenship checklist 2

Your action plan – goals, roles and timescales

- What do you want to achieve?
- What will success look like?
- How will you measure success?
- What’s the timescale for the project?
- Who is in your team? What are their strengths?
- Who’s going to be responsible for what?

Your action plan – steps to success

- Which team members are involved?
- What is each person going to do?
- What resources do you need?
- What steps do you need to complete?
- What is your deadline for each step?
- How will you keep on track?

Planning a short partial project

As the previous section highlighted, the use of short partial projects is important to support students’ progression across the various dimensions of active citizenship. These may focus on helping students to work in groups to achieve an impact or make a change that the teacher has set, or they may simply focus on a specific set of skills.

Such projects reduce the planning process greatly and shorten the time the project will take. Alternatively, a short project may focus on the planning stages of an action to help students understand the complex issues that can arise and the number of steps needed to complete to establish a safe and successful project.

How then can this be embedded into your planning? This case study illustrates how one teacher looks for opportunities in her schemes of work to encourage students to develop their active citizenship skills, building on the core knowledge and concepts she teaches.

Case Study 10: Building active citizenship into a scheme of work

Contributed by Lorellie Canning

In KS3, you may plan to deliver a rights and responsibilities scheme of work in the October–December term, as it coincides with Human Rights Day. As part of the unit, I generally include one lesson on child soldiers. For Year 7, it is always an incredibly engaging but shocking lesson, which often leaves them angry. This is why I planned a ‘blood on your hands’ campaign to mark the International Day against Child Soldiers in February. The students had been taught the lesson and were affected by it. They wanted to do something. We discussed the forthcoming international day and considered how we could mark it. The students came up with the idea of painting our hands red and printing them on paper as a petition rather than getting signatures. The students loved the idea and their campaign was born.

Look at your own schemes of work to think about when you have issues that will cause a reaction in the students. How can you get them to engage beyond the lesson? For example, if I am teaching about the local council in KS3, then a logical progression is for the students to consider what improvements are needed in the area and then write to the local council about the issues and invite them in to discuss it further.

From a work–life balance perspective, I wouldn’t advocate multiple active citizenship activities and campaigns running simultaneously if you are a ‘one-man band’, as it can be exhausting and time-consuming to ensure the momentum is not lost. Instead, look at the schemes of work and provide opportunities for students to develop the active citizenship skills of letter-writing, creating and completing petitions, meeting with influential people and discussing issues with them. This way they are learning the skills and you can focus on driving forward at least one or two campaigns a year. Ideally, you would want to have a spiral curriculum in place, with students having multiple experiences of active citizenship throughout their five years at secondary school.

Planning for inclusion

When thinking about inclusion in the mainstream classroom, helpful strategies are likely to be relevant for ensuring that all students can thrive in an inclusive citizenship classroom.

The most effective tool recommended for teachers to help their students make progress is scaffolding. The Education Endowment Foundation report into SEND in mainstream schools tells us:

“Scaffolding is a metaphor for temporary support that is removed when it is no longer required... [It could] be visual, verbal or written.”
(EEF, 2020, p. 26)

Scaffolding differs from differentiation in that the former “usually involves breaking up learning into parts so that students can gradually tackle more complex materials whereas the latter involves teachers modifying content, processes or products to create the best learning experience” (Hasa, 2021). In the following sections, relevant inputs are suggested after each case study as examples of scaffolding in which teachers might use selected verbal, written or visual supports. These strategies can be calibrated according to student needs and used at any stage of the project. Some scaffolding could be planned prior to the lesson and some might be used responsively during the lesson (McLeskey *et al.*, 2017).

Points for reflection

- Consider your own approach to teaching and learning, the theory behind it, and how this applies to lessons where you are not the provider of knowledge.
- If you are not familiar with the constructivist perspective, read about this learning theory and consider how this might affect the planning of active citizenship.
- Look at the work of Bruner and the spiral curriculum. How could this influence your planning of lessons on an active citizenship project? Review your current units of work. Where do you see opportunities to place a short partial project?
- Look at schemes of work that seem to grab students’ interest and think about whether you can add or further develop a ‘change action’ as a final step. This could double up as an assessment opportunity as it provides an ideal way to check students’ understanding.



The teacher's role during an active citizenship project

The ultimate aim of active citizenship as outlined at the start of this document is:



AGENCY

Helping students to recognise themselves as citizens with the ability to effect change in the world.



POLITICAL LITERACY

Giving students the understanding of how public, private and local to global institutions work, and the power and remit of these; and how citizens can effect change within these institutions and wider society.

For a fuller discussion of 'political literacy' see:
www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/why-political-literacy-is-at-the-heart-of-citizenship-education



AWARENESS

Providing an opportunity for students to consider how their beliefs and interests might conflict with other people's, and how this conflict can be resolved within a framework of democratic values.



CAPACITY

Acquiring the knowledge, skills and concepts needed to be active citizens and to effect positive social and political change.

With this in mind, it is important to consider the role of the teacher when planning lessons. Teachers often find themselves as the expert in the room, providing the knowledge to students and allowing them to learn it and apply it to various situations. However, when dealing with an active citizenship project and working towards any of the four aims above, this position becomes more difficult.

Freire (2005/1970) described the concept of 'banking education', in which teachers 'deposit' information, but this is particularly unhelpful in relation to active citizenship aims. Rather, the teacher needs to focus on drawing out from students what their passions are and what impact they want to make. The change in teacher role for these lessons becomes one of a facilitator and, rather than 'transmission', the main process is one of 'dialogue'. Students and teachers work together to solve problems, to create change or to make an impact. To be fully successful, the most experienced teacher will become, along with the student, a learner, and they will grow together. For Freire, this promises a more fully human relationship, but it does represent a significant shift in relative roles.

So in practical terms, what does this mean for your planning of these lessons? Firstly, it will depend on the type of project you are running and how experienced the students are. A younger group of students, or those with little to no experience of taking part in active citizenship, will need a more structured approach from you as a teacher than students who have had experiences of a range of active citizenship projects and understand a range of the processes and practices.

To illustrate this further, let's consider a Year 7 class in term 2 of their Citizenship education. Human Rights Day is marked on 10 December, and as a school you might support the 'Write for Rights' campaign organised by Amnesty. This is an awareness-raising campaign around those facing human rights abuses, particularly those imprisoned for something young people take as a given in their lives. For example, there is the case of Shahnewaz from Bangladesh, who was imprisoned in May 2021 regarding a Facebook post that expressed concerns about the building of a new coal-fired power plant and the environmental damage it could cause. Students with experience of active citizenship and an awareness of human rights will need little explanation, and your role as a teacher will be limited to introducing the aim of the project, which is, in this case:



AGENCY

For students to recognise themselves as citizens with agency and the ability to effect change in the world.



CAPACITY

For students to attain the knowledge, skills and concepts required to be active citizens and to effect positive social and political change.

This might manifest itself in more specific goals for this project:

- To be part of a worldwide human rights campaign that has a proven history of influencing political leaders and holding them to account.

Because this is a pre-existing campaign, in which all of the major decisions have already been taken, your scope for action as a teacher and the students' scope for creativity are constrained. But that is fine, and is often the case with mass movements, where an individual is exercising a form of collective agency and merely offering up their participation to build the momentum of the campaign. The choice is ultimately to participate as prescribed or opt out. Therefore, once students are happy with their participation, your role and planning could take the following form (Figure 15):

Figure 15: Likely teacher roles in the 'Write for Rights' project

INFORMATION-PROVIDER	Providing the students with the current case studies for the campaign and additional information around human rights to support their letter.
RESEARCHER	Facilitating access to additional information that students need. Human rights issues can be harrowing for young people and it is important to consider what depth of information you would like to offer the students around cases.
TIME-KEEPER	You provide the time-frame for the project's completion. Are students expected to research and write letters in one lesson or across a number of lessons? You must make an informed decision in light of your knowledge of the students.
EXPERT IN THE ROOM WHEN NEEDED	You can offer answers to questions when asked but avoid instructing students. This is their action and their message to the duty-bearer, not yours.
FACILITATOR	You provide the materials students need to complete the action and ensure the classroom is a place where this can happen. You may be the person who posts the final letters to the address given.

How, then, does this compare to the roles needed when students have never taken part in this project before and have little to no understanding of human rights? Firstly, the number of lessons is very likely to be different. Therefore, with regard to your role as time-keeper, you will plan more than one lesson and structure the use of the time more clearly. Perhaps, rather than saying to the students you have X number of lessons to complete this project, you will break the action project down into smaller steps. For example:

- 1 In lesson 1 you will research the case you have been given.
- 2 In lesson 2 you will research the human rights that have been abused.
- 3 In lesson 3 you will draft your letters and we will discuss them.
- 4 In lesson 4 you will write your letters ready to be sent.

This is likely to follow on from some introductory lessons to establish baseline knowledge about human rights and the history of letter-writing campaigns, where your role will probably focus more on being an instructor. As an instructor, you will help students explore the area of study, considering together the importance of human rights and implications of human rights abuses and preparing them to take part in the active citizenship project. The following case study provides an example of a simple plan from a comprehensive school near Liverpool.

Case Study 11: A planned short-term project

Contributed by Zoe Fox

This is a Year 9 whole-class activity in which students write to their MP about an issue they feel passionate about, either to raise awareness or to request support for some change.

PROJECT OUTLINE

1. Students discuss ideas, form groups and devise a basic outline of what they want to achieve.
2. Students spend time gathering evidence to support their viewpoint and research secondary sources.
3. Students draft letters, the teacher checks them and final drafts are made and sent.
4. Students start to get responses from the local MP and from other Cabinet members, or other elected representatives like police and crime commissioners.
5. Students evaluate their action and analyse the positives and negatives of lobbying in this way.

EXAMPLE

Student A, who is a looked after child, chose an issue related to their own personal experience under local authority social care and their own personal experiences of social workers, foster carers, other agencies and professionals.

Their main issue was that more needs to be done to ensure children in care have consistency in who is responsible for them, their needs and their education. The student outlined how, during their six years in care, they had 14 different professionals sharing some responsibility for them, including appointed social workers and four different placements in their three and a half years at high school. This was their passion – to fight for change for them and students like them – and it linked to their career plan to go into the legal profession to fight for justice for other young people like them. As their teacher, it was essential to be aware of what was driving their passion for their action, and to talk to the member of the SLT who is in charge of looked after children and liaise with them over the child, watching out for any changes in their behaviour or demeanour, and to learn more about their background and what might be a potential trigger for them throughout their action. It was also essential that the school's safeguarding policy was adhered to at all times – this was carefully considered from the outset of the project.

As an outcome of their action, they were amazed that they received a response from the MP and from a Cabinet Minister and they felt that finally someone in power had listened to them and that they had a voice. They felt extremely empowered by that and subsequently they talked about the project in assembly. This passion is taking them further to explore what legal change they can make and what their next steps are.

At one end of the spectrum of teacher roles, you may find yourself working collaboratively with a group of young people, learning together and from each other about a specific topic or campaign. But at the other end of the spectrum, you may also find yourself occupied with the rather mundane tasks of booking rooms, sending emails and making appointments.

Considering the safeguarding implications of projects

As teachers, you will be acutely aware of the important role you play in keeping students safe around the school and inside classrooms. When dealing with an active citizenship project, there are perhaps even more instances where you could unknowingly allow your students to become exposed to risks. Therefore, it is essential during the planning process to consider when these risks may occur and how you can mitigate them.

The first step is to identify where students may be exposed to risks. Figure 16 suggests some common issues that might occur at various stages in the process.

Figure 16: Some common risks to think about

STAGE OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP PROJECT	POSSIBLE RISK
Primary research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students expose themselves to dangerous situations to observe. Students expose themselves to harmful information when carrying out research. Students put themselves at risk while interviewing people connected with their project theme. Students cause distress or injury to others while interviewing on an unsuitable theme.
Secondary research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are exposed to harmful information via the internet or other means while investigating their project theme. Students are not sufficiently media-literate to identify mis/dis/malinformation. Students are exposed to conspiracy theories while researching.
Carrying out the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students organise events that have not been risk-assessed and which could lead to injury or compromise wellbeing. Students present unsuitable information to younger students. Students disclose private or sensitive information without realising.

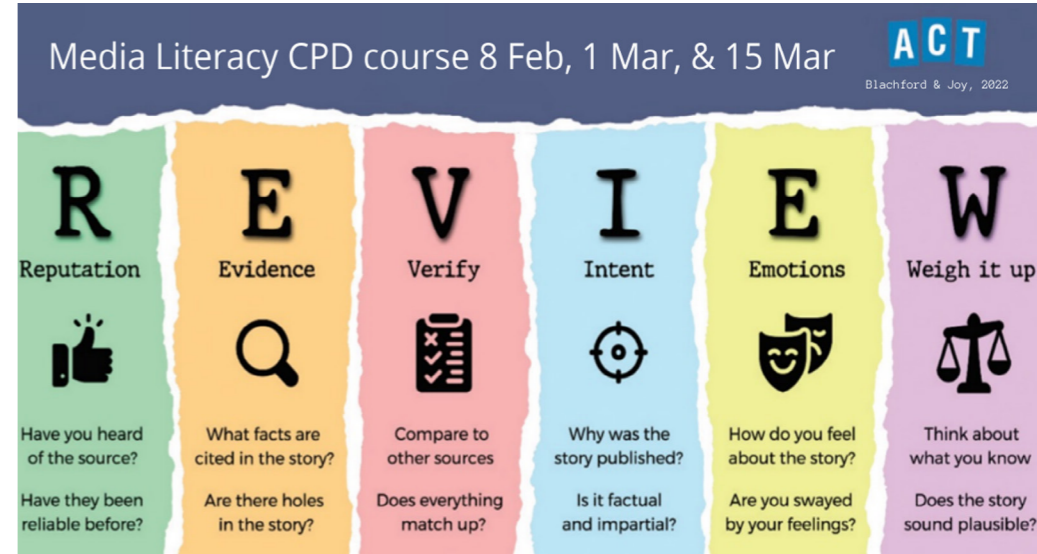
Awareness of potential risks should not provide a reason for you to be less aspirational with your students or to excessively limit or control their agency when completing an action project. As with so many things in school, careful planning can ensure you have done all you can to minimise risk for your students. If you speak to experienced Citizenship teachers, they would probably look at you strangely if you asked them, “What safeguarding planning do you take during active citizenship projects?” This is because, for most teachers, decisions that minimise the risk for students in lessons are made instinctively, with active citizenship being no different. However, there are times when this has not happened, potentially leading to severe consequences.

Take the student who proposed an active citizenship project focused on addressing local drug dealing, for instance. This presented two potential problems. First, in terms of safeguarding, the student had planned to stand and carry out observations in an area where they knew that drug dealing and drug taking was happening. Clearly this is something that we would not allow, and the teacher had to intervene quickly in this situation to deal with the student’s research ideas and project theme and ensure they became realistic. Second, there is a chance that this theme choice could be too focused on PSHE, and so a conversation would be required to develop an explicit link to crime or drugs policy.

However, sometimes the safeguarding risk can be much less obvious than this case. Take, for example, the student who wanted to organise an action project around the theme of knife crime. Their secondary research would draw on information from well-known knife crime organisations and police reports, and they planned to use reported case studies of knife crime victims as evidence. At face value, this seems like a relatively uncontroversial topic. However, the school safeguarding lead received a complaint from the student’s family because they had been a victim of knife crime, and the student was, in their view, not dealing well with the loss of a family member. They felt that this project was an example of the student’s obsession with knife crime and the poor police investigation of their situation, and that it would not support the student’s mental health.

The above example highlights other key areas to consider when planning these lessons: How well do you know your group? Do you need to speak to the pastoral team or the safeguarding team to check for any information that could be important? Should parents be aware of the topics students are pursuing in case they have not disclosed key information to the school? Figure 17 summarises some of the strategies considered by experienced teachers to minimise risk in the early stages of a project.

Figure 17: Strategies for minimising risks with research

OPTION	EFFECT
Providing pre-approved research resources	<p>If the students are all working around a similar theme, it could be possible for the teacher to provide a range of secondary research material that they have already pre-vetted to ensure its safety. This can also be an option for more controversial themes where you want to be certain of the validity of the material to prevent students from straying into propaganda or controversial theories.</p> <p>An additional bonus of providing pre-approved research is that you ensure students look at sources that show different attitudes towards their topic. This prevents them from becoming locked into an echo chamber.</p>
Providing media literacy lessons and tools	<p>Ensuring students have the ability to assess their sources using critical media literacy skills will help them deal with dis/mis/malinformation. It will also help them build resilience against conspiracy theories as they will approach these with a critical thinking focus.</p> <p>Students can be given methods and tools to help them assess sources for their secondary research. The ‘REVIEW’ method, which was developed by ACT as part of media literacy training, is an example of this. A video explaining the model can be found here: vimeo.com/440926118/6ea1c37634</p> 

OPTION	EFFECT
Providing a pre-approved list of research sites and resources	<p>Many students struggle with developing their research skills and often they are rather hit and miss. This can be one of the factors that leads them into accessing material that is unsuitable for use in schools and exposes them to risk.</p> <p>Providing a list of useful sites gives students the freedom to find their own research and test this for reliability and authenticity, while still minimising the chance of them becoming exposed to information that is harmful.</p>
Providing guidance when constructing tools for research	<p>Many projects will involve students developing some kind of research tool for their primary research section. To minimise risks, it can be helpful to produce a group research tool or work together to produce research questions that will ensure students gain the information they require without causing upset to participants.</p> <p>A good practical strategy is to make students pilot their questions in class and ask peers to report back on strengths, weaknesses and ethical issues. Where necessary, the students may have to liaise with their teacher or designated safeguarding lead to ensure the questions and recruitment and reporting strategies comply with safeguarding requirements.</p> <p>More information on this can be found below.</p>

GCSE awarding organisations monitor safeguarding issues arising in exam answers about active citizenship projects. One has devised a checklist for use with students, to help ensure risks are identified and managed appropriately. Figure 18 provides a summary of the checklist to use with students if it is apparent that there are ethical and safeguarding issues to be worked through.

Figure 18: Safeguarding checklist for students

The word ‘safeguarding’ means to protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure. As you are to complete both research and actions in your active citizenship project, it’s important we consider how to keep yourself and others safe. Here are some questions for you to consider on behalf of keeping both yourself and others safe while completing your work.



1. Avoiding harm: Risk assessment and management, safety and legal issues

1.1 Will your research involve the research or discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. drug use, class, money, mental health, disability, relationships and conflict, etc.)?

Yes No Not relevant

If ‘yes’, please provide details of how possible adverse reactions will be avoided and what support will be in place to manage any adverse consequences:

1.2 Could pain or discomfort to yourself or others potentially result from the study?

Yes No Not relevant

If ‘yes’, please provide details:

1.3 Is there likely to be misinformation online about your topic of study?

Yes No Not relevant

Explain your reasoning below:

If ‘yes’, please state how this can be avoided or managed:

1.4 Will any element of your citizenship action be conducted off-site (i.e. not on school premises)?

Yes No Not relevant

If ‘yes’, please provide details of other locations and explain how you will minimise any risks to your own safety while off-site:

1.5 Will you be alone with individual participants or a group of participants, therefore placing you at risk?

Yes No Not relevant

If ‘yes’, please state how this can be avoided or managed:

1.6 Are there any adverse risks or potential safety issues (e.g. from online abuse) that your citizenship action project raises for you and/or for your participants or others?

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' please specify and provide details of how you will safeguard yourself and others in these scenarios:

2. Anonymity, confidentiality and consent for primary and secondary research

2.1 Will your primary research involve collecting or analysing personal data or sensitive personal data? (Personal data refers to information that may identify individuals, e.g. name, address or any set of characteristics that would clearly identify individuals or very small groups.)

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' you should think about how you can avoid this. If it is unavoidable, you must irreversibly anonymise data, by removing names and other linked or identifying information that may still identify an individual without their name.

2.2 Will you undertake any research with younger students?

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' please provide details:

2.3 Will you use any visual data where participants will be recorded or used in photographs?

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' you should think about how you can avoid this. If it is unavoidable, you must explain how you will use this information.

2.4 Will you audio- or video-record interviews and/or observations?

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' please provide details on how participants' anonymity will be maintained:

2.5 Does the research involve participants responding to internet surveys or emails, etc.?

Yes No Not relevant

If 'yes,' please provide details on how participants' anonymity will be maintained:

(Provided by Matt Narain)

Points for reflection

- Citizenship coordinators often work with large teams of non-specialists. To what extent does your support and CPD for colleagues explicitly address these challenging teacher roles?
- Are your curriculum materials clear on the roles teachers should undertake?



Summary

In this section, we have shared some practical suggestions for planning individual projects or campaigns. We have suggested that there is a lot teachers can do to clarify the precise focus of each project, think ahead about roles and expectations (for themselves and students) and pre-empt any safeguarding risks. In the next section, we continue to consider pointers for managing projects successfully.

04

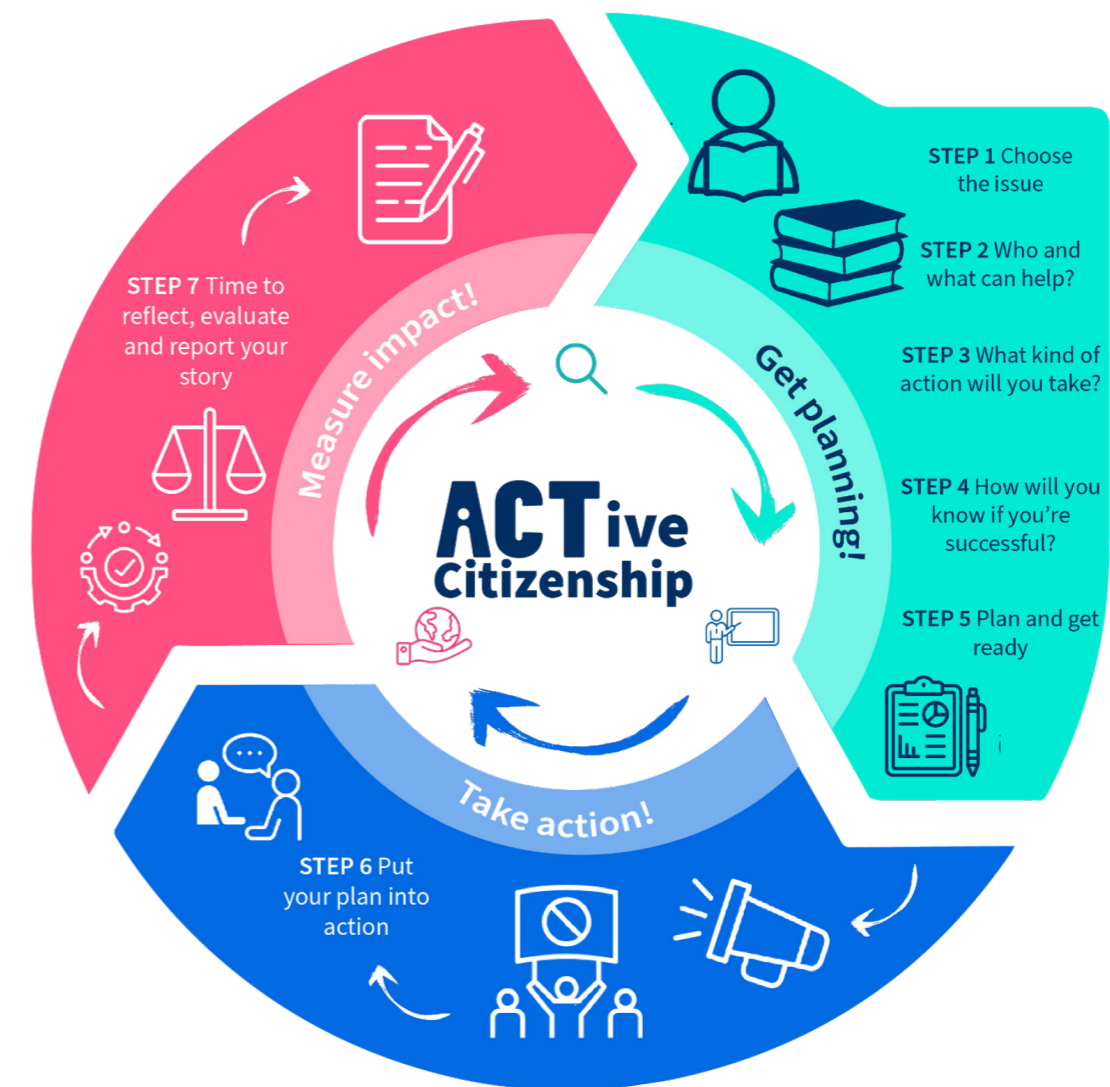
Projects in Practice



Active citizenship in practice

This section shares lots of practical ideas for planning individual projects and for guiding the learning during them. There is no doubt that facilitating active citizenship requires a lot from teachers, and draws on teaching approaches that are less common in other subjects. Experience counts here and it definitely gets easier over time, but the examples provided here from experienced colleagues should help those who are newer to Citizenship to plan more realistically in order to maximise the chances of their active citizenship projects being engaging and meaningful learning opportunities.

The ACTive Citizenship Toolkit highlights three key stages in an active citizenship project, as shown below:



The guidance in this section is structured around these stages.

Get planning!

During this stage, it is important to establish and maintain a dual focus on the process of students' campaigns as much as the outcomes. Given that they are understandably focused on what they want to achieve, it is essential to emphasise that you are more interested in the process that the students go through and what they learn as a result.

This focus on process also enables you to establish up front the importance of self-assessment and reflection throughout their campaigns and certainly at the end. In turn, this enables you to explicitly address the importance of the formative assessment process, to ensure students monitor their progress, think about adjustments and keep the campaign on target.

What follows is a breakdown of the areas teachers and students might consider through the project planning stage. There are some prompts and resources along the way.

The teacher's role

Consider what makes a good/bad topic or issue for active citizenship

The choice of topic or issue is relevant not only to the ultimate success and outcome but also, perhaps more importantly, to the engagement of the students throughout the active citizenship project. It is important to spend time refining the right topic, whether it is for a small activity or a full GCSE project.

The focus of active citizenship is often on the skills, but students also have to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, so this is one key element to focus on when deciding what makes a good or bad topic.

At a very basic level, does the topic choice link to citizenship concepts and curriculum requirements? If so, have students learned enough about the issue to be able to understand how to make a difference or impact? If the answer is no, then perhaps with good primary research they can fill this gap, but this is likely to lengthen the time taken to complete the campaign, which is not always possible given the pressure on school timetables.

A common problem with 'bad' topics is that they are, in fact, not Citizenship, and instead fall into the PSHE or RSHE area, making them very different in terms of investigation and impact. Having said that, these are often areas that our students feel passionately about, and with some consideration they can be developed into a Citizenship topic. For example, the topic of youth mental health is an area that concerns many of our students, especially the lack of support available. At first glance, this might appear to be an RSHE area of study, especially if the campaign is designed around encouraging students to speak out about mental health or suicide awareness, etc. However, if the group looked at the funding around youth mental health support, investigated the lack of provision in their local area, lobbied local councils or Government or made links to the UNCRC, then suddenly it is valid as a Citizenship project based on rights.

Keep to milestones

As all teachers are aware, making progress across a series of lessons is important, no matter what area of a curriculum you are teaching – an active citizenship project is no different. In fact, it can be even more important to keep students motivated when doing active citizenship, so they don't leave everything until the end when working on long-term projects.

It's also important to be aware that as the supervising teacher, you might be tempted to extend timelines if you see students achieving success but needing a little more time to keep up momentum or reach ultimate goals. The same may also apply if things are not going to plan and students need to make changes. While changes to your planned structure of the unit can be positive for outcomes, this can only be done if your overall curriculum time allows for it, which is often not the case. Therefore, it is equally important for teachers and students to keep to key milestones.

There are different ways in which milestones can be implemented and monitored. You could encourage students from early in the planning stage to complete an action plan with dates by which each task is to be completed. As part of each lesson, you can then check the action plans to see whether students are keeping to task, then set up interventions for groups that are not making progress.

Additionally, you'll often find that structures of lessons can be challenging when moving from the instructor role to the facilitator role; therefore, using the very early part of the lesson to establish the expectation of where students are and what progress is expected in the lesson can be a good way of ensuring that there is still a clear structure. At points in lessons you can also ask groups to give you an update on how much progress has been made so far, before a final check at the end. Figure 19 provides an example of a standard planning format used for project planning, while Figure 20 illustrates how milestones and checklists can be adapted to short projects. Further tools for planning are provided in the ACTIVE Citizenship Student Toolkit.

Figure 19: A step-by-step action plan

STEP	ACTIVITY	REASON	WHO?	WHEN?	DONE?
1	Meet with teacher to discuss proposed theme	So that the leadership team understands what we will be doing and why and we can get appropriate permission and any safeguarding checks	All	10 June	✓
2	Arrange for NGO/campaign speaker to come in for assembly	To make sure the assembly happens	Sarah & Mark	12 June	✓
3	Speaker comes and delivers assembly for Years 10 and 11	So that all young people get to listen to the presentation	All	9 July	
4	Carry out an AFTER survey with Years 10 and 11	To discover the impact of our action	Cindy & Lukas	10 July	

(Extract adapted from Nahyan Islam's GCSE planning booklet)

Figure 20: Checklist for Write for Rights mini-project

<p>So far, I have...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read all the case studies for this year's campaign.<input type="checkbox"/> Decided who I want to help.<input type="checkbox"/> Written in my book who I have chosen, what has happened to them, why I think it's wrong and why I chose them.<input type="checkbox"/> Written in my book what Amnesty suggests could be included in the letter.<input type="checkbox"/> Written a draft letter in my book.
<p>Next, I am going to...</p>

(From Lorrellie Canning)

Define measures for success

Step 4 in the 'Get planning!' stage of the ACTive Citizenship Toolkit involves helping students to identify how they are going to measure their success in the project. Doing this early on helps to ensure that successes, limitations and learnings along the way – be they personal or in relation to the intended change outcome – can be anticipated, observed, recognised and celebrated. It can also be useful to list unintended consequences of action later in the project, when debriefing.

Points for reflection

- What checks could you put in place during the early part of planning to ensure that your students' choice of theme for their projects will allow them to gain active citizenship knowledge and operationalise the concepts and substantive prior learning?
- What safeguarding considerations do you put into practice automatically when planning other Citizenship units currently? You may want to consider topics of a controversial and sensitive nature – for example, some areas of human rights. Are there techniques you use in this planning that would work effectively for active citizenship planning?
- Why might engaging students with progress and meeting milestones on an active citizenship project be more challenging than in other lessons? What strategies and routines do you use elsewhere in your teaching that could support students here? What planning considerations are important to encourage progress across this series of lessons?



The students' role

At the start of this section, it was noted that students are often more focused on their project outcome than the process. They can be solution-focused – for example, motivated by getting the information they need to present their assembly, but forgetting some of the pragmatic steps needed to achieve this, like booking the assembly hall, the AV equipment, etc. As a teacher, you may therefore need to provide a basic planning template and tools to structure the students' work during this phase.

Involving students in developing campaign ideas

Ultimately, we want action projects to be (largely) student-led, with the students identifying the cause and action they want to take. Sometimes we might provide them with the opportunity to develop action from an area of study we have completed – for example, human rights or the environment. This is perfectly valid, especially when students are learning the process of campaigning and developing active citizenship. However, as their capacity increases, teachers should encourage greater independence, with students deciding their own area of targeted change.

Some teachers approach this through lessons and simply ask students what they care about as a springboard for developing action. ACT's scheme of work 'How can I become a changemaker in my local community?' includes a lesson plan that asks: 'How do I choose a topic to investigate?'

While this approach is helpful for focusing students on their own concerns, Hendon School has adapted a strategy from Community Organising Methodologies to help students think about what would be most useful for their wider school community, rather than starting from their own individual interest. Figure 21 provides an overview of the process.



Figure 21: Running a listening campaign

What is a listening campaign?

Listening campaigns are essentially a way to identify concerns and priorities in the community. In our context, this can be within a class, year group or whole school. It is not just about collecting data but is a relational activity that encourages participants to talk about the issue(s).

Through this type of relational research, not only are the issues brought to light, but everyone in the community is brought into the process of identifying the issue(s) that concern(s) them.

Different ways to conduct a listening campaign

There are different ways to run listening campaigns. They can be small-scale or include the whole school community. These include:

In a classroom setting:

- 1) Divide the class into small groups of four and set a question, e.g. “If you could change one thing in the school/local/national/global community, what would it be and why?”

Ask the students to explain to each other the reasons why. Then ask the students to write down their concerns and get the groups to circulate around the classroom (global café). Students then add to the ideas developed. Once they have seen each other’s ideas, start to draw together common threads and action-plan next steps.

- 2) Alternatively, students can write their ideas on post-it notes and then stick them up on the board. The teacher/students then start to move post-it notes into common threads. The next step is to then look at potential solutions and develop an action plan.
- 3) If your school has access to IT, your class could use an app like Mentimeter and see the issues appear on the whiteboard in real time. This could then lead to the action-planning stage.
- 4) Depending on the group, or to collect further evidence about the class priority, you could run a whole-group listening. Students are paired up or in threes and have a conversation with each about the issue. Students are encouraged to share only what they find comfortable to share. This is a really good way to identify testimony (personal stories) that could be used to develop the campaign, although they can only be shared with permission.

In a whole-school setting:

- 1) Students can lead the listening campaign over a lunchtime in the canteen or another appropriate space. They can then put a question up on the wall/on a noticeboard, with the other students encouraged to contribute using post-it notes. A small group of students can then group them together to identify issues. A follow-up canteen session could be used to unpack the single identified issue.
- 2) Students can also lead the same campaign with staff if appropriate. This could be during a departmental meeting, CPD day or staff briefing.
- 3) With confidence or over time, schools could include parents in the listening campaign.

Benefits of the listening campaign:

- It provides an opportunity for students to develop their listening skills, confidence and social and communication skills.
- Students can develop a critical and practical understanding of the nature of power and how they can build and use power themselves to effect change.
- Students are involved in co-developing and co-designing the project, which increases a sense of agency.
- It can identify students who have a passion for the issue and potential leaders who want to support the active citizenship project.
- It enables the project team to address issues that really matter to the community.
- It is possible that as a community starts and continues to listen, they have the power to make real change for the better.

Challenges of the listening campaign:

- Ensuring everyone is involved (inclusion in the classroom).
- Ensuring that certain students do not dominate the discussion.
- It takes time to set up, conduct and analyse the survey and/or conversations, especially at a whole-school level.

“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”

Marian Wright Edelman

“Every child, by the time they leave school, should have worked with others to craft, and win a campaign that has made their life, and that of their community, better.”

Sebastien Chapleau

(Contribution from Noelle Doona)

This poem has also been used as a tool within the listening campaign:

I Am

- I am (two special characteristics)
- I wonder (something you are actually curious about)
- I hear (an imaginary sound)
- I see (an imaginary sight)
- I want (an actual desire)
- I am (the first line of the poem restated)
- I pretend (something you actually pretend to do)
- I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)
- I touch (an imaginary touch)
- I worry (something that really bothers you)
- I cry (something that makes you very sad)
- I am (the first line of the poem repeated)
- I understand (something you know is true)
- I say (something you believe in)
- I dream (something you actually dream about)
- I try (something you really make an effort about)
- I hope (something you actually hope for)
- I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

Developing a rationale/theory of change

Another useful way to ask students to slow down this initial phase of planning is to focus not only on the selection of an action, but also on developing a careful justification in relation to their context and aims. In Figure 22, we suggest some questions that are rooted in the idea of a theory of change, which charities often use to explain how they intend to achieve their goals.

Figure 22: Planning a theory of change

	Understanding the situation →	Planning responsive actions →	Reviewing your performance →
PROBLEM	<p>Be clear about the situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem/issue you want to take on? • What are the underlying causes? • What aspects of this issue do you want to work on? • What do you want to (realistically) achieve? 	<p>Be clear about how your actions would improve things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could you (realistically) do to achieve the desired change? • How would the actions you plan secure an impact? • What would change if you undertook these actions? • What are the problems you might encounter? How might you overcome these? 	<p>How will you know you have been successful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of evidence will help you review your success? • How will you gather this evidence? • How will you review your process as you proceed, as well as the final outcome?
PEOPLE	<p>Who is affected by this issue and how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What more do you need to know about those affected? Do you need to consult others? • Who has the power to change things? • What are the interests of those with power? • Who might serve as partners or allies? 	<p>How will you work with allies? When do you need to start talking to them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you engage those with power? Who are their gatekeepers? What can you offer them? • How will you work as a team to undertake the required actions? Allocate roles and build in reviews. • Think ahead about a plan B; how might you adapt your goals, roles, actions or timescales in the light of experience? 	<p>How do you want different people to remember you? Do you want to build some lasting relationships from this project? If so, how will you follow up?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you evaluate your teamwork? • What do you want to learn by the end?

Inclusive strategies in the planning stage

There are some common obstacles to progress at this stage. Many students lack the motivation to start a project, which could reflect a host of possible issues:

- limited comprehension of the task or topic
- they may be reluctant learners generally
- lack of agency, or scepticism about making a difference
- limited access to resources
- personal trauma
- lack of background knowledge/cultural capital
- limitations placed on them by the school – for example, because of safeguarding guidelines

This list makes it sound daunting, but the following case study illustrates how some fairly basic strategies can be helpful in overcoming initial obstacles.

In particular, there is an emphasis on those Freirean concepts of dialogue and learning from each other. Freire urged teachers to listen attentively in the early stages of working together, in order to learn about the lives of their students and generate themes and curriculum hooks related to learners' real-life experiences and concerns. Case Study 12 provides an accessible example of how this might work in the busy everyday reality of the secondary classroom.

Case Study 12: An example of collaborative group work to promote engagement and interest

Contributed by Sera Shortland

In any class, you can have a range of students presenting with many different needs. Deciding the issue to pursue can often be the hardest part in a room full of students with different interests and levels of engagement. A barrier often faced is how to get all students involved in the decision-making process. Generating ideas can also be a problem in an inclusive classroom, as you want all voices to be heard. One technique that can be helpful is using collaborative learning. Group work is excellent for generating ideas, creating a buzz in the classroom and getting to the heart of issues that really matter to young people. Group work can be tricky to manage and you need to know your classes well in order to be positive and productive.

Organising students into groups of three seems to work best for me in terms of group dynamics, as group work can generate conflict as well as better ideas. A general discussion of issues that students are concerned with tends to generate a wide range of concerns, but for some students this may not be enough to get engaged and on-topic. Student A, while starting an active citizenship project, had no interest at all, did not want to engage and did not wish to contribute ideas to the whole-group discussion, but by the end of the project they were checking in with others about contributions and asking to present work.

In these situations, I have to try a lot of strategies to engage; sometimes they work, sometimes they don't! I get to know my students well, take interest in their home lives, find out about hobbies and try to relate current affairs to their lives. In class, we talk about the effects of politics on their everyday lives, and how a news story might not seem to be relevant to them but actually might also have consequences that affect lives. As a teacher, I know there can be a temptation to take over, but it is important to keep that balance. I try to do this by directing students to appropriate sources while making sure that what they are planning is achievable and considers the school safeguarding policy and procedures.

I knew Student A worked on weekends in a landscaping and building family business, so I talked to them about some of the challenges that a family business has to overcome and asked to see where the business operated the community. We looked on a map of the area and talked about customers. Slowly, we came onto a discussion about how the cost of living crisis had impacted the business. We also talked about business in general to depersonalise the conversation and what families might need. They were the expert in the room, and by allowing this student to have input and share ideas, they were able to get buy-in to become a stakeholder of the activities that we were trying to do.

We researched House of Commons select committee enquiries and found one that related to the impact of COVID that the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee had worked on. Student A was engaged by a conversation, which led to them contributing an idea to the class discussion and vote to identify what actions we would adopt.

Key recommendations

- 1 Collaborate with students to generate multiple options that might generate engagement.
- 2 Know your students well: what are they interested in, what type of actions do you think they will enjoy the most, what skills do they already have that they can bring to the project? Think ahead about whether certain topics are inappropriate considering their backgrounds/experiences and try to pre-empt this to avoid the deflation associated with having an idea blocked.
- 3 Create responsive prompts and verbal scaffolding, such as: Let's look at this together. What have you done before that might help you with this task?

Don't forget, your work needs to include...

Verbal scaffolds

Using verbal scaffolding allows the reteaching of tricky concepts, using questioning to identify and address misconceptions or a need for further consolidation (EEF, 2020). There are four aspects of verbal scaffolding that could be considered during this initial phase: questioning, talk time, talk for writing and think-alouds.

Questioning

There are a few tips to ensure that questioning can be effective in the classroom. Questioning is an important part of scaffolding, so it is worth considering how you might question your students. Lemov (2010) has popularised strategies such as 'cold-calling' and 'wait times' to effectively question students. The idea is that posing a question and then giving students time to think about the answer, before choosing someone at random, means that they will actually take time to think about a response because they are unsure of who will be chosen. This should be coupled with verbal sentence starters so that those pupils with SEND or EAL can safely participate as they have the language model provided. Teachers should try to avoid the option to 'opt out', as this discourages student participation and decreases engagement.

Kagan and Kagan (2015) provide different forms of questioning such as 'think-pair-share' and 'rally robin'. Ensuring that all these options are successful requires the teacher carefully considering the seating plan and having an awareness of students' personalities and who might work well together.

Talk time

Teachers must incorporate 'talk time' into their planning to develop oracy and confidence in students. This also enhances critical thinking, as students take time to listen to one another. Talk time is also valuable in that it allows the teacher to listen to the students and get to the causes they might have interest in.

Talk for writing

Students with SEND or children who are new to English may find it particularly useful to verbalise and form their ideas with another student or the teacher before writing them down. Using a whiteboard to structure sentences first enables students to develop their ideas in a non-committal and non-permanent way.

Think-alouds

Similar to talk for writing, this allows students to verbalise what they are doing. So, for example, if a question has multiple stages, the student can go through the process verbally step by step, helping to cement the process in their long-term memory.

Points for reflection

- How do you manage the initial stages of an active citizenship project and what obstacles have you encountered?
- How inclusive have you been, and are there any ideas here you could adapt to develop your own practice?



Take action!

The teacher's role

Gatekeeping and opening doors

Srijbos and Engels (forthcoming) interviewed secondary students and their teachers about collaborative (staff-student) projects undertaken in schools. They found that in such cases, even though the students felt they had equal roles in the projects, they expected their teachers to take on supportive and to some extent guiding roles. This was especially the case when they were undertaking action in the community 'beyond the safe environment of the partnership', but they also expected them to work as 'their ambassadors within the broader school community'.

Obviously there is a balance to strike here and the young people recognised there was tension between their teachers' roles as empowering and representing them. This seems to be a question of professional judgement, but it is worth remembering that students can feel like they are shouldering the burden of a project even though teachers take on key roles from time to time. Sometimes there may be good reasons for leaving the students to do everything, but at other times a judicious teacher intervention can move things along with a momentum that might be otherwise lost. A practical example might be the teacher enlisting the support of the headteacher to secure a meeting with a key local council member, rather than leaving the young people to start the slow process of cold-calling.

Monitoring

Most of the advice in the planning section is about setting up systems in advance that will enable you (and the students) to monitor the progress of each project. These simple mechanisms just need to be managed, so that students get into a routine of self-review, evaluation and discussion about their progress. These processes might even provide a welcome element of structure during the main implementation phase of projects that will inevitably include lots of different loose ends and challenges.

Alongside managing these routines, some teachers talk about adopting a distinctive persona during the main action phase of a project. In the case study of Oakham School (in ACT's collection of case studies), Viv Lamb talks about nurturing a specific role in classes when her students are working on their individual GCSE projects. She adopts a benign, slightly detached presence, so she can see and hear what is happening in the groups and the students know that she is available if they need help. She stresses that this is an active, engaged role, as she is monitoring progress and making decisions about where to follow up, but she is also studiously avoiding being the centre of attention or taking overt responsibility for the lesson. This might result in quietly joining a group to encourage them to develop a more explicit political framing of their aims, or encouraging students to resolve a conflict that has arisen in their group, or even helping them to devise a timeline they can keep to if their progress is stalling.

“The coaching role – ‘the we do phase’ – is demanding on the teacher as it calls for a change in position and relinquishing traditional teacher control methods. This is the group’s action; the teacher is the supporter and cheerleader. It is demanding of the teacher’s questioning techniques, with more Socratic questioning being needed to encourage the students to deepen their thinking or identify and solve problems themselves. If the teacher is too critical, you will find the students’ motivation as self-doubt and fear of ‘failure’ can creep in.”

Viv Lamb

We might describe this as a qualitative, informal formative assessment process, in which the teacher is constantly monitoring the projects and prompting students to think about how to improve.

Encouraging

Teachers tend to drive forward lessons and learning activities to get the most out of their contact time with students, and so, for many students, their active citizenship project might be the longest period they've had to sustain motivation and momentum for a single learning activity. For some students, it can become disheartening, especially when they feel they are not making the progress they would like or their projects seem to be stalling or not achieving their desired outcomes.

When this happens, it is important to ensure that students can celebrate success wherever they find it. This affirmation can come from their peer group as well as teachers. When planning, you may want to build reflection points into your lessons, where you draw attention to a success of a group or individual. This might be as simple as using a visualiser to show their work to others. You could also give the class a few minutes to visit other people's projects, listen to their ideas and give positive feedback. Tell the students from the start that it is the process you are interested in and not the outcome, and this is what you have been looking at.

The students' role

Team-building

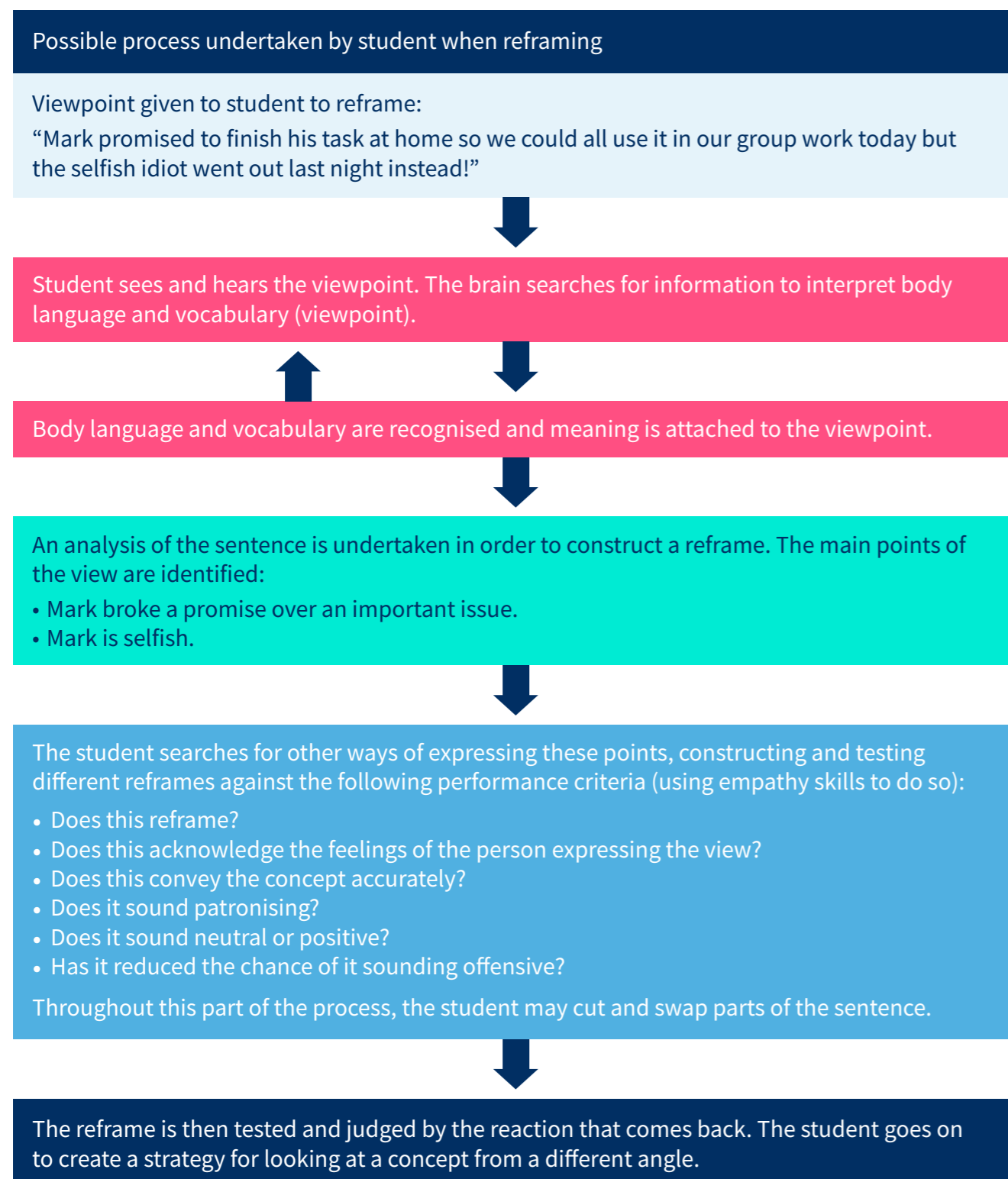
Projects often stand or fall on the quality of teamwork, so it is important to help students take responsibility for managing this element of the work. It may be useful to be explicit about what counts as desirable behaviour in a group, and so checklists like the following (Figure 23) may be adapted for regular review meetings. The idea here is to help the students focus on providing positive feedback to one another, as well as indicating aspects that could be better developed (see Figure 24). This could be a part of the routine established in lessons, with students finding a positive to describe a fellow team member, then suggesting an area for improvement.



Figure 23: Positive team contributions

- Good use of verbal/talking skills
- Good use of visual/drawing skills
- Good use of design skills
- Good use of writing skills
- Good use of skills supporting others
- Good use of organisational skills
- Share a skill, help another team member to work
- Suggest a check on progress, comment on work so far
- Ask useful questions and check out what the task really meant
- Summarise or write down what the main task was
- Sum up what has been said so far – remind the group of progress and decisions made
- Add to or improve someone else's suggestion
- Suggest a plan to do things in the right order
- Write down group plans or decisions
- Make suggestions about possible solutions
- Help the group work out what needed to be done
- Comment on possible arguments and help to solve them
- Check that others understood what was going on
- Help the group agree what would make the product high quality
- Make links to other groups/communicate for the group
- Help the group to finish the task to a high quality – suggest improvements to boost quality
- Read information out, get information to do with the task
- Display, present the group's work to others
- Make a suggestion about how the group should work
- Help the group to review their work
- Help to identify the skills used and the way the group worked
- Make a suggestion about how to complete the task
- Make a suggestion about how a decision should be made
- Help everyone decide who should do what
- Help the group to spot a possible problem
- Use humour and fun to improve the group atmosphere
- 'Break the ice', 'start the ball rolling', get people started...
- Help the group get an agreed vision of their finished product
- Care for people's needs in the group (rest, refreshments, etc.)
- Make comments to make people feel proud of their achievements
- Notice someone who was not involved and try to bring them in
- Help a new member to join the group
- Encourage and support another team member
- Comment on someone else's skills and encourage them
- Remind the group of time limits or other limits
- Help other people to stay on task

Figure 24: A process to practise for reframing negative feedback



(From The Citizenship Coordinator’s Handbook by Jerome et al., 2003)

Evaluating progress

If the teacher sets up and manages the kinds of routines outlined in this guide, then it will be relatively straightforward for students to keep reviewing their work (and revisiting their plans) as they proceed. In addition, the ‘Focused Conversation Method’ provides a useful structure for supporting students to be reflective (Nelson, 2001). The model includes prompt questions for students to reflect on different experiences, and the following suggestions are designed for evaluating a group project in order to plan action (see Figure 25 below). These should be shared with students so they can prepare, and used by teachers to guide the conversation while maintaining a sharp focus.

Figure 25: A focused conversation to evaluate progress

Objective questions

- What did you do on the project last week? Show me your notes, activities, etc.
- What were the results?

Reflective questions

- What were you really happy about in what you did?
- When did you feel frustrated?
- What was the group’s high/low point?

Interpretive questions

- What have you learned about the topic?
- What have you learned about working together?

Decisional questions

- What changes do you need to make?
- What actions do you need to take to proceed with the project?
- Who will do these things?
- When will you do them?
- What do we need to arrange in order to be successful?

(Nelson, 2001)

Inclusive strategies in the action stage

Some of the more common issues arising in the action phase of the project include:

- Issues around communication, often resulting from limited vocabulary or literacy in general. This can cause problems with basic strategies such as letter-writing or survey-writing.
- Difficulty in working collaboratively due to a lack of confidence (in language/emotionally/due to anxiety).
- Managing safeguarding in situations beyond school.

The following case study demonstrates how group work can provide a supportive context for a new EAL student, helping them find their feet and negotiate a meaningful role in the larger project.

Case Study 13: Supporting an EAL student to carry out an active citizenship project

Contributed by Sera Shortland

This active citizenship GCSE project arose after students were concerned about the rise in hate crime in their local area and noted that their city council website had no information for young people to learn about the laws concerning discrimination and where to get support should people need it. The action required students to research and create surveys and petitions, email their local councillors, create a short film about countering discrimination and plan for an event to educate students about the Equality Act.

In this particular class was a student who had recently arrived in the UK and was assessed as being in the early language acquisition stage. Student B came to the school late in Year 10, and by December in the same year of entry gained a GCSE level 1 in Citizenship studies and took a meaningful part in an active citizenship project. The Citizenship curriculum is ideally suited to language learners through the nature of deliberative discussions and debates that take place. All courses are neatly broken down into different knowledge requirements. Learning the key vocabulary for each unit is key, as is the use of images and sentence starters to support young people to connect with the new language.

Within active citizenship campaigns, the use of a laptop with online translation was essential for this student, enabling them to be actively involved in the research process. Doing an active project also meant that Student B could learn a language in a very different context, through action. At every stage of the action process, Student B was consulted using translating applications, images and thumbs up and down. They were put into a supportive collaborative group and tasks were designed so that students could choose an action they felt confident with. During the main event, Student B organised the visitors coming into the event hall. We had nine 'protected characteristics' tables set up, with students training visitors on every feature before showing a video that they had made and asking people to sign a petition to send to the local council. Student B grew in confidence during the activity and asked to give out the support cards to every delegate in the event.

Inclusive strategies in the action stage

Make it predictable, so students know what each stage is and why you are doing it.

- 1 Know your students – carry out pre-visit briefings, create detailed risk assessments in collaboration with the students, have dry-run visits, accompany students if necessary.
- 2 Share positive impact of 'failed' projects.
- 3 Use writing frames for letters and surveys and verbal scaffolding through role-playing conversations/situations.
- 4 Provide real-world examples of new vocabulary. For example, when introducing a new word, giving students three different sentences with the word in it allows them to understand the meaning of the word better. Then asking the student to form their own sentence with the word in it allows you as the teacher to assess whether they have understood the meaning of the word. Another useful tip is to provide the student with synonyms of the new word, to relate it to existing vocabulary.

Points for reflection

- What balance have you struck between teacher involvement and student agency? What teacher roles do you use most frequently?
- What obstacles have you encountered in the implementation phase, and how well have you been able to overcome them? Are there any ideas here that could help?



Measure impact!

The teacher's role

When building an assessment and evaluation plan for the project, it may be helpful to be explicit about the different types of learning that we might expect to result from a project:

- From a **general knowledge** perspective, students may learn about specific public issues they are working on.
- From a **political literacy** perspective, they may learn about civic participation and the range of actions available to citizens.
- From an **interpersonal** perspective, they may learn about strategies for working with others.
- From an **intrapersonal** perspective, they may also learn something about themselves, their own motivations and interests (Jerome, 2008).

Not all of these are equally reflected in formal assessment, especially for the GCSE, but it may be useful to address them separately at different stages.

This guide has already provided a variety of tools that will be useful, including appropriate assessment rubrics and questions to guide reflection, such as Figure 25. In addition to these general processes for reviewing and evaluating the experience, it is useful to practise the kinds of questions that might occur in the GCSE exam paper if the project is going to be formally assessed in this way. There are good reasons to think the current approach to assessing active citizenship is deeply flawed, making it more important that students have opportunities to practise describing their projects in response to the style of question that features in the exam. Figure 26 provides some examples taken from a teacher's active citizenship GCSE coursework booklet.

Figure 26: Example GCSE-style questions with notes for answers

Explain how the topic of your citizenship action is linked to the study of Citizenship. (2)

- Our action aimed to raise awareness of the rise of knife crime (1), which was a case study we learned in class about how Parliament has tried to tackle this issue (1).
- Our action aimed to educate young people about the impact of social media and 'fake news' (1), which was connected to studying the role and influence of the media (1).

Explain one reason why careful primary research is so important when planning a citizenship action. (2)

- Primary research such as surveys to find out about different perspectives related to our chosen issue (1) made sure we could target our action in a way that would gain the most support (1).
- Primary evidence such as interviewing X (1) meant that we knew early on in our action what we were allowed to do/not allowed to do (1).

Explain one advantage and one disadvantage of collaborating with others during a citizenship action. (4)

Advantages:

- You can allocate different roles to people (1), which can make sure people do the jobs they have the most skills in, e.g. leadership (1).
- Having several members in your citizenship action team means you can achieve more (1), as you can allocate people different jobs to do and get more done in a shorter space of time (1).
- Working with others gives you a range of different ideas and viewpoints (1) that help you consider how other people may feel about your chosen action and target your action more effectively (1).

Disadvantages:

- Some issues may not require a large team of people (1), which may mean that not everyone has a job to do (1).
- If some team members have strong personal opinions about your chosen issue, this can cause arguments (1) as they may not be easy to persuade about the topic or the methods you choose for your action (1).
- Working with close personal friends may lead to wasted time (1), as it may be easier to get distracted with friends instead of focusing on the issue (1).

Explain two things you would do differently, other than more careful research, if you were to work on another citizenship action. (4)

- Choose a different issue that people are more interested in (1) to help gain more support for my action (1).
- Work with a bigger team instead of in a small group/on my own (1) so we can share tasks more and achieve more in the time allocated (1).
- Set a more achievable/realistic goal (1) to help ensure my action is more likely to be successful (1).
- Plan a specific timeline for the whole action (1) to ensure we meet our deadlines and complete the whole action in the time given (1).

"The success of a citizenship action depends on the size of the team involved and on the evidence from secondary sources used." How far do you agree with this view? (12)

You must base your answer on your experience of your own citizenship action. Give reasons for your opinion, showing that you have considered another point of view.

Points in support may include:

- Using evidence from secondary sources can inform your initial choice of action by selecting an issue that is important to others.
- Evidence from secondary sources can also help you choose how best to achieve your goals.
- More people in your team means that you can allocate tasks to those best suited to the roles needed.
- A large team may be more effective in getting tasks done in the time allocated.

Counter points may include:

- It may be more important to have a strong team leader who can organise the tasks and other team members.
- Having a realistic and achievable goal may be more important than having a large team.
- A large team may actually be a hindrance to success, as it can lead to arguments about the choice of action or methods to use.
- Spending too much time gathering evidence from secondary sources can slow down an action and lead to more time being spent reading through materials than carrying out the action itself.

(Adapted from Nahyan Islam)

The students' role

It is important to give time to students to evaluate the action and process as well as the outcome. It is too easy to assume that a successful campaign that met its objectives was great, and one that failed to bring about the desired change was a failure. But it is perfectly possible for the 'successful' project to have followed a troubled trajectory or to have generated no new learning, while the 'failure' may have led to plenty of valuable learning.

While the exam looms large for students undertaking GCSE Citizenship studies, there are also other more creative opportunities for sharing learning. For example, Altrincham Grammar School for Girls continued its active citizenship work with Year 9 during the COVID lockdown by asking students to write short blogs about issues they had adopted. This ensured students continued to practise their research skills and to think about what kinds of actions they could champion to make progress. You can read some of these blogs here: aggsczsocialaction.wordpress.com Oakham School requires students to present their GCSE projects to parents during the school's 'Speech Day' at the end of the summer term. This helps to provide a real external audience for the students' work.

Inclusive strategies for measuring impact

Some of the common problems that might be encountered in the final evaluative and reflective stage include:

- limited executive functioning – for example, finding it difficult to sequence and organise thoughts and ideas, or limitations with working memory
- lack of social skills or social anxiety, making it difficult to discuss weaknesses or team-working challenges
- low literacy skills and reading ages
- limited computer skills
- difficulty in selecting and classifying information, especially moving from description to summary and evaluation

In the following case study, one teacher shares advice for teaching inclusively, based on the insights they have gained while supporting students with ASD to complete the GCSE active citizenship project.

Case Study 14: A complete GCSE Citizenship action project through all three stages in a SEND school for students with ASD

Contributed by Nicola Foyle

1 Get planning

One of the difficulties facing students in our school is a low level of executive functioning, which makes planning, sequencing and organising difficult. Due to the relatively unstructured nature of projects, students can feel overwhelmed and unclear about the purpose and outcome of projects. They can also struggle with teamwork and social interactions and can really feel a sense of failure if a project goes wrong. Students often do not have a full experience at KS3 and therefore may not have had previous active citizenship experience before GCSE.

The following is a useful checklist to think about when planning a project:

- Ask yourself: 'Has there been part of the specification that students have been really interested in?'
- I adapted the 'GCSE Citizenship studies: Guide to citizenship action' (Pearson, 2023) and provided my students with examples of previous projects. This removed some of the pressure for some of my students who struggled to think of any ideas at all, and enabled them to develop a clear focus and aim.
- Start small – the project is not going to change the world but any impact is a good thing.
- Projects can be in school.
- Break the action into manageable chunks/sections so students can focus on tackling one part at a time.
- Set the expectation up front that it can go wrong or it may not end the way you expect it to, and this is all part of the experience.
- Build on the trust and relationships you have with students.
- Identify skills students already have and where they might need more support. Try to pre-empt issues in order to plan for success.
- Encourage the students to think about solutions rather than dwell on the problems.
- Take co-collaboration between teachers and students seriously – for example, by using technology such as Google Drive to plan as well as carry out action.



2 Take action

- Set clear expectations for the project and how to work as a group.
- Teach explicitly about teamwork and managing social interactions – for example, give each person a role and purpose within the group. Look for ways in which each person can work independently on a task before bringing it back to the group, rather than making every task collaborative.
- Support team meetings, using an agenda to keep the group on track.
- Support executive functioning by scaffolding the process of carrying out the action. Our students need help to put actions in order in their action plan and devise realistic time-management plans.
- The teacher’s role as facilitator is flexible, but this varies depending on students’ engagement and mood. In some lessons, the teacher may need to be more direct.
- Teach research skills explicitly and provide research resources or avenues to go down for those groups that are struggling to find resources.
- Focus on developing the skills through the action citizenship project (OCR specification: research and enquiry, interpretation of evidence, planning, collaboration, problem-solving, advocacy, campaigning, evaluation).
- If things go wrong, support the students to understand that just because the project has taken a different turn, that does not make it a failure.
- Everything takes longer than you expect it to, so build in a few lessons as a buffer.
- Give choices in ways to complete the action.
- Use a framework to help show the process visually.
- Acknowledge students’ voice and their ideas while actively helping to refine and shape them. Remember that student agency is not an all-or-nothing choice; it is a question of degree and will depend on the time available and the students’ current capacity.
- Recognise that some students will get fixated on particular ideas and the teacher’s role is about finding ways to build those ideas into a project. This could be as simple as looking at the exam board criteria to show students that their ideas do not fit the criteria for an action citizenship project and may need to be developed in order to fit.

3 Measure impact

- Be prepared for resistance from some students, who may assume that because their action is complete, the project has finished.
- Provide frameworks to break down the conclusion and evaluation.
- Find ways for students to celebrate what they have achieved – school website, social media, newsletter, linking to local charities.

(This follows the ACTIVE Citizenship Toolkit framework)

Key recommendations

- 1 Thread opportunities for citizenship action into the Key Stage 3 curriculum to build the skills students need.
- 2 Use similar language to connect active citizenship to other elements of the school, such as student voice, student council, house events, volunteering and linking to community.
- 3 Teach examples of GCSE Citizenship action in order to model how to undertake it explicitly.
- 4 Teach examples of how students have responded to ‘failure’ and adjusted their plans as they have gone along. Include examples of evaluations of projects that have totally failed to show the value of such experiences.

Visual scaffolding

“Visual scaffolds may support a student to know what equipment they need, the steps they need to take or what their work should look like.” (EEF, 2020)

Task planners

These can be filled in at the planning stage or during the action and help to break down the process into smaller parts so students can visually see where they are at and work through each part independently.

Model examples of work

This sets expectations for students and ultimately allows them to complete tasks independently and successfully. The idea is for the teacher to model a piece of work (I do), then for the teacher and student to work collaboratively to complete the task (we do) and then, once the concept or skill is grasped, the student works independently to complete (you do) (McLeskey *et al.*, 2017).

Use images

Having images to support new vocabulary also allows the student to make connections more easily in order to associate new words with existing concepts (Scott *et al.*, 2003). However, do be considerate about not cognitively overwhelming a student with too many resources, and ensure images are appropriate.

Points for reflection

- How well do your students reflect on their experiences and evaluate the process?
- What strategies/resources have you used that work well?
- Are there any aspects of the evaluation phase that are less well developed in your school? Are there any strategies in this guide that might help you to address these?



Summary

Perhaps the most important point to emerge from this section is that when students undertake active citizenship projects, this does not mean teachers take a back seat. It actually means teachers are active in a number of challenging ways. Many students expect their teachers to play an active role in guiding them, preparing the way for them to engage with other adults and decision-makers, and generally clearing obstacles. This is not about restricting their agency, but rather about creating the most conducive conditions possible for it to flourish.

05

Core Messages



Advice and key messages

There is a lot of detailed advice and examples in the pages of this guide, so to end, it will be useful to reflect on the core messages. There are six important pieces of advice from the ACT team:

- 1 You don't have to change the world (or even change anything), you just have to try.**
The value lies in the experience, and making sure you identify some meaningful learning from it.
- 2 Students learn from their mistakes and so do teachers.**
Teachers should be open about this – sometimes they may give advice that doesn't work, and our understanding is always partial and developing. Some of us are old enough to have experienced the rise of social media as a 'new' challenge, which has since become completely normalised as a campaign tool. At the time of writing, the rise of AI presents a similar challenge, and many of us are just beginning to think through the possibilities. We need to stay alert to what we know and what's new and be open with the students when we don't know the answers.
- 3 The most important thing is to find a project that motivates the students.**
If students find a topic they care about, this is going to build both their interest in Citizenship and their motivation to do more. If they are motivated, they are more likely to stay involved, and this in turn is more likely to build their sense of agency.
- 4 It's not all about the 'set-piece' project.**
There are a number of short, easy-to-plan and easy-to-manage activities that build students' understanding and competences for active citizenship. Rather than focus largely on the big active citizenship project, teachers also need to build in simulations, role-plays and case studies to ensure students routinely engage with active citizenship knowledge and skills.
- 5 Keep faith with your students.**
Most of the teachers involved with this guide told stories of students excelling in active citizenship who had previously shown little interest in, or aptitude for, school work. The novelty of starting with their interests, engaging with the real world and giving them space to develop their own ideas can be transformative for some disaffected students. Make sure you give them the space to succeed, even if it does sometimes feel like a risk.
- 6 Teachers need to be micro-political agents.**
Colleagues are sometimes sceptical or risk-averse and see active citizenship projects, especially ones that are largely student-led, as potential problems. Citizenship teachers have to use their own citizenship skills to negotiate the space to try things out and use their successes to reassure people it's okay.

Further support

If you are inspired to do something more, ACT has a wealth of resources and support available to help you take the next steps in developing your own active citizenship pedagogy.

Resources

1. ACT's schemes of work

There is an entire scheme of work to provide lessons from Year 7 to Year 11, with active citizenship building blocks running through the whole programme. The following units include a more substantial focus on active citizenship:

- **KS4 unit:** How can I be a changemaker in my community? A series of 11 lessons that guide your class through an active citizenship project.
- **KS4 unit:** Speaking truth to power. Using case studies of how a wide variety of people have sought to bring about change in their communities.
- **KS3 unit:** What role can I play in making my school a fairer place? A Year 7 unit developing research, consultation and discussion skills as students work through a project to think about how to improve the school's behaviour policy.
- **KS3 unit:** Does our town/city/borough meet the needs of everyone in our community? A Year 8 unit consolidating the year's learning through an active citizenship project.
- **KS3 unit:** You are an active citizen, what do you care about? A Year 9 unit helping students to identify a citizenship topic of interest, undertake research and make a presentation to others.
- **KS3 unit:** Community volunteers or social media influencers: Who has the most power and influence? A Year 9 unit exploring the role of voluntary groups and different forms of activism, and considering the drawbacks of 'slacktivism'.

2. The ACTIVE Citizenship Toolkit

This popular resource provides a structure to follow for your active citizenship project. It's a great starting point for a teacher who is new to the subject, and provides some useful resources for students to help keep account of their projects, including planning grids and writing frames.

You can find this online here: www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/active-citizenship-key-stage-3-toolkit-award-resources

3. Active citizenship investigations: Ideas and approaches

This is a guide for KS4 and GCSE teachers and provides a range of practical starting points and suggestions to help focus students on selecting and planning great projects.

You can find these (and more) online here: www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resources

CPD programme

ACT runs a programme of online CPD workshops throughout the year. These vary each year, to reflect demand and current interests, but have included the following topics in the past:

- GCSE active citizenship (where to start?)
- How to improve your active citizenship outcomes
- How to use the ACTIVE Citizenship Toolkit
- Using active citizenship as an assessment tool
- Working with local community groups

For details of the current programme, visit: www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/training-and-events



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Published by Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2024©