

Civics Projects With Purpose:

Why Data Literacy Must Be at the Heart of Every Project.

A civics project without data literacy is an opinion. With it, it becomes evidence, and evidence drives change.

WHY INTENTIONALITY MATTERS

Projects become proof, not just proposals.

When students gather original data (surveys, interviews, public records, field observations) their civics projects carry real weight. Policymakers respond to data. Numbers change policy.

Students learn to ask better questions.

Data literacy teaches students to interrogate their own assumptions: What does the data actually show? Who is missing from this dataset? What context is behind this number? These are the habits of an informed citizen.

It builds resistance to manipulation.

Students who gather and analyze their own data develop a natural skepticism toward data they encounter elsewhere (in the news, in political campaigns, in AI-generated content). They know how data can mislead because they have been inside the process.

It connects local issues to wider patterns.

A student project on food access in their neighborhood becomes more powerful when linked to USDA data on food deserts statewide. Data literacy gives students the tools and the skills to zoom out and make that connection clearly.

HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

01 IDENTIFY

Students choose a local civic issue and form a research question, defining what data they need to prove or disprove their hypothesis before they start collecting.

02 COLLECT.

Students gather primary data through surveys, interviews, and observation, plus secondary data from public records, evaluating each source for credibility and bias.

03 ANALYZE

Students examine patterns, contradictions, and gaps. They practice statistical reasoning: What does this number mean? Who is represented and who is not?

04 ARGUE & ACT

Students build an evidence-based argument and present it to a real audience (a school board, a city council, a community group), driving genuine civic advocacy.

The most powerful learning happens when students see how their work can influence real communities. This process transforms civics education from a theoretical subject into a living practice of democracy.

RESEARCH



ADVOCACY



ADVOCACY



ACTION



ACTION



Non-Partisan Voter Registration Drive & Voter Turnout, Georgetown High School



Visit thecivicatlas.org to learn about our new civic education and data literacy initiative!

