

SEAL-EARNING UNIT

Unit 3: The School Equity Review (High School Civics Project, modeled on NYSED Handbook Example 2)

Subject	Civics, Government, Data Literacy, Policy Analysis
Grade Level	9-12
Possible Seal Credit	New York High School Civics Project, 1.5 points (Civic Participation; may be earned twice in grades 9-12). Rhode Island student-led civics project. Connecticut portfolio evidence.
Time Allotment	5 weeks, one 45-minute class or delegation meeting per week plus independent work.
Youth and Government Process Practiced	Committee-style review of data and policy, a resolution in Youth and Government format, a hearing with the people the policy affects, and a formal presentation of recommendations to the principal, superintendent or board of education.
The Project Standard	NYSED's Handbook gives an example High School Civics Project (Example 2) in which a student committee analyzes equity data and gives the administration recommendations on the code of conduct. This unit follows that model. It treats the school as the jurisdiction and the code of conduct as the law, and runs the analysis the way a legislative committee would: data first, testimony second, recommendations last.

Learning Objectives:

- ▶ Students will be able to read the school's publicly reported data (enrollment, attendance, suspensions, participation in advanced courses and activities) and describe what it shows by student group.
- ▶ Students will be able to read the code of conduct and identify which provisions connect to the patterns in the data.
- ▶ Students will be able to take testimony from students, staff and families fairly and record it.
- ▶ Students will be able to write a resolution with findings (whereas clauses) and recommendations (resolved clauses) that cite data and policy.
- ▶ Students will be able to present the recommendations to school leadership and record the response.

Materials:

- ▶ The school's public report card data (New York: the NYSED data site; Connecticut: EdSight; Rhode Island: RIDE's report cards) and the district's code of conduct
- ▶ Handout: "Data Reading Guide" (Supporting Document 1)
- ▶ Handout: "Code of Conduct Review Grid" (Supporting Document 2)
- ▶ Handout: "Hearing Protocol and Testimony Record" (Supporting Document 3)

- ▶ Handout: "Equity Resolution Template" (Supporting Document 4)
- ▶ Handout: "Equity Review Rubric" (see Assessment section)

Pre-Planning:

- ▶ Confirm Seal Committee acceptance and tell the principal the project is happening; the project ends with a presentation to leadership, so leadership should expect it.
- ▶ Work in a committee of four to six students with a chair, a clerk and members. Each member keeps individual notes and writes an individual reflection.
- ▶ Agree on ground rules with the advisor: no naming of individual students or staff in any document; data at the group level only; testimony anonymized.

Week 1: Read the Data (45 minutes)

- 1. (10 minutes) What equity data is:** Enrollment, chronic absenteeism, suspensions and referrals, participation in advanced courses, clubs and athletics, broken out by the groups the state reports (race and ethnicity, economic status, disability, English learners, gender).
- 2. (25 minutes) Data Reading Guide:** In pairs, students complete the guide for two measures: what the school-wide number is, what the number is for each group, where the gaps are, and what the trend has been over three years. Mark any group too small to report.
- 3. (10 minutes) Committee findings, draft one:** Three sentences that state the largest gaps with numbers. No causes yet.

Week 2: Read the Code (45 minutes)

- 1. (15 minutes) Code of conduct walk-through:** Locate the sections on expected behavior, the discipline ladder, which offenses allow suspension, due process steps, and any restorative or support options.
- 2. (25 minutes) Review Grid:** For each data gap from Week 1, record which code provisions touch it (for example, the referral process and dress code for referral disparities; attendance interventions for chronic absenteeism; prerequisites and recruitment for advanced course gaps). Rate each provision: clear or vague; discretionary or fixed; supportive options present or absent.
- 3. (5 minutes) Questions for the hearing:** Each member writes two questions a hearing witness could answer that the data cannot.

Week 3: The Hearing (45 minutes)

- 1. (5 minutes) Protocol:** Chair opens; each witness gets three minutes; members ask questions through the chair; clerk records; no names of other students or staff; witnesses may decline any question.
- 2. (35 minutes) Witnesses:** Invite in advance at least six: students from different groups and grades, a teacher, a counselor or dean, a family member, a student government officer. If a witness cannot attend, take written testimony.
- 3. (5 minutes) Clerk's summary:** Three themes the testimony added to the data.

▲ Week 4: Findings and Recommendations (45 minutes)

1. **(25 minutes) Equity Resolution:** Findings as whereas clauses, each citing a number or a testimony theme. Recommendations as resolved clauses, each naming a specific code provision to change, add or clarify, who would carry it out, and how success would be measured in next year's data.
2. **(15 minutes) Cost and feasibility check:** For each recommendation, one line on cost and who decides (principal, superintendent, board). Recommendations the board must approve are flagged for the board calendar.
3. **(5 minutes) Vote:** The committee adopts the resolution by roll call; dissenting members may attach a one-paragraph minority view, which is also evidence.

▲ Week 5: Present and Record (45 minutes plus the meeting)

1. **(20 minutes) Build the presentation:** Ten slides or a two-page brief: the data (two charts), the code provisions at issue, what the hearing added, the recommendations with measures, the ask.
2. **(25 minutes) Rehearse** with the advisor playing the principal.
3. **Present to leadership** (the principal at minimum; the superintendent or board where the recommendations require it). The clerk records the response and any commitments. Send a thank-you with the resolution attached.
4. **Reflection (300 to 500 words per member):** What the data showed, what the hearing changed, what we recommended, what leadership said, what I would do next, and how this project changed my civic knowledge, skills and mindsets.

▲ Assessment: Equity Review Rubric (100 points)

- ▶ **Data Analysis (25):** Correct reading of at least two measures by group; gaps stated with numbers; trends noted; small groups handled correctly.
- ▶ **Code of Conduct Review (20):** Relevant provisions identified; each rated; connection to the data explained.
- ▶ **Hearing (15):** At least six witnesses across groups; protocol followed; testimony recorded and anonymized; themes summarized.
- ▶ **Resolution (20):** Findings cite data or testimony; recommendations are specific, assigned and measurable; cost and decision maker noted; vote recorded.
- ▶ **Presentation to Leadership (15):** Delivered to the principal or above; clear ask; response recorded; thank-you sent.
- ▶ **Reflection (5):** Specific and honest.

▲ Differentiation:

- ▶ **Support:** Pre-pull the two data measures and the three code sections most likely to matter. Reduce the hearing to four witnesses. Provide a resolution frame with the whereas and resolved stems written.
- ▶ **Challenge:** Add a comparison school from the state data; survey the student body; present to the board of education during public comment and track whether any recommendation appears on a later agenda.

▲ Supporting Documents

1. Data Reading Guide

Measure: _____ Source and year: _____

School-wide figure: _____ Figures by group (list each group reported):

Largest gap (which groups, how many points): _____

Three-year trend: narrowing / widening / flat. Evidence: _____

Groups suppressed for small size: _____

What this measure cannot tell us: _____

2. Code of Conduct Review Grid

Columns: Data gap. Code provision (section and page). What it says. Clear or vague. Discretionary or fixed. Supportive option present. How it might connect to the gap. Question for the hearing.

3. Hearing Protocol and Testimony Record

Protocol: The chair opens and states the purpose. Witnesses speak for three minutes. Members ask questions through the chair. No individual students or staff are named. Witnesses may decline any question. The clerk records.

Record for each witness: Role (not name), grade or position, date, three key statements, questions asked and answers, theme tags.

4. Equity Resolution Template

A Resolution of the [School] Student Equity Review Committee concerning the Code of Conduct

Whereas, [finding with number and source];

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Whereas, testimony received on [date] from [number] witnesses indicated that [theme];

Therefore, be it Resolved, that [specific recommendation], to be carried out by [office], with success measured by [data measure] in [year]; and

Be it further Resolved, that [second recommendation]...

Adopted [date] by a vote of __to__. Chair: _____ Clerk: _____ Minority view attached: Y / N

5. Rhode Island and Connecticut Notes

This unit meets Rhode Island's student-led civics project definition: student led (the committee chooses its measures and recommendations), reasons from evidence (data and testimony), and connects policy levels (district policy, state reporting requirements, and the federal civil rights framework behind the reported groups). For Connecticut, file the data guide, the resolution, the presentation and the leadership response as one portfolio entry.