

SEAL-EARNING UNIT

Unit 6: The Youth and Government Portfolio (Extracurricular Participation, 40 Hours)

Subject	Civics, Leadership, Reflection, Communication
Grade Level	9-12
Possible Seal Credit	New York Extracurricular participation, 0.5 points (Civic Participation; minimum 40 hours plus an essay, presentation or project; may be repeated). Connecticut: documents involvement in a civic organization, one of the law's examples of a civic engagement project.
Time Allotment	The full program year (September through the state conference), with four short check-ins of 20 minutes and one final session of 45 minutes.
Youth and Government Process Practiced	All of them. This unit does not add work to the program; it documents the program. A delegate who attends delegation meetings, a steering conference and the state conference passes 40 hours easily. The unit makes sure those hours are logged, the artifacts are kept, and the reflection is written in a form a Seal Committee can accept.

Learning Objectives:

- ▶ Students will be able to keep an accurate participation log with dates, hours, activities and verification.
- ▶ Students will be able to collect artifacts that show growth across the year (first bill draft and final bill, speech drafts, committee notes, press coverage, brief, opinion).
- ▶ Students will be able to write a reflective essay or deliver a presentation that connects program experiences to the four civic readiness domains.
- ▶ Students will be able to present the portfolio to the Seal Committee with advisor verification.

Materials:

- ▶ Handout: "Participation Log" (Supporting Document 1)
- ▶ Handout: "Artifact Checklist by Program Area" (Supporting Document 2)
- ▶ Handout: "Reflective Essay or Presentation Guide" (Supporting Document 3)
- ▶ Handout: "Advisor Verification Letter" (Supporting Document 4)
- ▶ Handout: "Portfolio Rubric" (see Assessment section)
- ▶ A folder (paper or digital) per student

Pre-Planning:

- ▶ Confirm with the Seal Committee in September that Youth and Government participation qualifies as the extracurricular option and what the essay or

presentation should look like. Note whether the student has already used this option in a prior year.

- ▶ The advisor is the verifier. Keep attendance at every delegation meeting and event from the first week.
- ▶ Set the four check-in dates: October, December (after any steering conference), February (before the state conference) and April (after it).

▲ **What Counts Toward 40 Hours**

- ▶ Delegation meetings and bill, brief or press workshops.
- ▶ Steering conferences (judicial, legislative, regional) and training days.
- ▶ The state conference, counted as actual program hours per day (sessions, committees, chambers, court, press work, elections), not sleeping or meals.
- ▶ Candidate and Presiding Officer training and duties.
- ▶ Service hours tied to the Lieutenant Governor's service focus (these may also count toward Unit 4 only if the Seal Committee agrees; do not count the same hour twice toward two seal options without permission).
- ▶ Youth Advocate Program meetings and State Advocacy Day.
- ▶ Preparation for the Conference on National Affairs, the National Judicial Competition or the Youth Governors Conference, and the events themselves.

▲ **Check-In 1: October (20 minutes)**

1. Distribute the Participation Log and Artifact Checklist. Students record September hours from the advisor's attendance.
2. Each student writes one sentence: what I hope to be able to do by March that I cannot do now. This becomes the first line of the reflection.
3. Students save their first artifact: the first draft of a bill, brief, candidate form or press assignment.

▲ **Check-In 2: December (20 minutes)**

1. Log steering conference or training hours. Advisor initials.
2. Artifact: committee notes, a revised bill, a draft speech or a brief outline.
3. Quick roundtable: one thing learned about how government actually works that surprised you.

▲ **Check-In 3: February (20 minutes)**

1. Log hours; project the state conference hours so the student knows they will clear 40.
2. Artifact: the final bill, brief, speech or press plan as submitted.
3. Assign the conference evidence list: bill book page, committee ranking, chamber result, court docket and opinion, press pieces, election result, photographs, any Governor's Office action.

▲ Check-In 4: April (20 minutes)

1. Log the conference hours; advisor verifies against the conference schedule.
2. Collect the conference evidence.
3. Students choose essay or presentation and read the guide.

▲ Final Session: The Reflection and the Portfolio (45 minutes)

1. **(30 minutes) Write or build:** Essay of 750 to 1,000 words or an 8-minute presentation, organized by the four domains, with at least one artifact cited under each.
2. **(10 minutes) Assemble:** Log with totals and advisor initials, artifacts, reflection, advisor verification letter.
3. **(5 minutes) Submit** to the Seal Committee. Students who present do so at the committee's next meeting or at a delegation showcase for families.

▲ Assessment: Portfolio Rubric (100 points)

- ▶ **Participation Log (25):** 40 or more hours; dated entries with activities; advisor initials on every page; no double counting.
- ▶ **Artifacts (25):** At least five, spanning the year, showing change over time; each labeled with date and context.
- ▶ **Reflection (35):** All four domains addressed with specific experiences and artifacts; the October sentence revisited honestly; what the student would do differently; what they will do next in civic life.
- ▶ **Presentation or Essay Quality (10):** Clear, organized, within length or time.
- ▶ **Verification (5):** Advisor letter complete and signed.

▲ Differentiation:

- ▶ **Support:** Provide a reflection frame with a paragraph starter for each domain; allow a recorded conversation with the advisor, transcribed, in place of the essay.
- ▶ **Challenge:** Require the student to mentor a first-year delegate's portfolio, or to present the portfolio to a school board or YMCA board as part of a program report.

▲ Supporting Documents

1. Participation Log

Student: _____ Delegation: _____ Program year: _____ Advisor: _____

Columns: Date. Activity (meeting, workshop, steering conference, state conference day, training, service, advocacy). Hours. Role or task. Advisor initials.

Running total: _____ Target: 40 hours. Hours also submitted toward another seal option (state which, with committee permission): _____

2. Artifact Checklist by Program Area

- ▶ **Legislative:** first and final bill drafts; memorandum of support; committee notes with technical questions received; ranking; chamber result; amendment forms; Governor's action.
- ▶ **Judicial:** fact sheet with ten facts; brief drafts; bench questions received; opinion; scoring.
- ▶ **Press:** assignments; story drafts and published pieces; broadcast script; shot list; fact checks.
- ▶ **Executive and Cabinet:** cabinet review forms; veto messages; speeches; theme worksheet.
- ▶ **Elections and Presiding Officers:** candidate form; speech drafts; press conference questions; results; chair script with notes.
- ▶ **Lobbyist and Youth Advocate:** leave behinds; contact logs; one-pagers; Advocacy Day notes.
- ▶ **Service:** plan, hours log, product.
- ▶ **All:** photographs with captions, program schedules, reflections from roundtables.

3. Reflective Essay or Presentation Guide

Open with the sentence you wrote in October and whether it came true.

Civic Knowledge: What do you understand about how laws are made, cases argued, or elections run that you did not understand in September? Cite an artifact.

Civic Skills and Actions: What can you do now (write law, question a witness, run a meeting, report fairly, lobby)? Show the before and after with two artifacts.

Civic Mindsets: When did you have to work with someone who disagreed with you? When did you lose, and what did you do? How do you think about participation now?

Civic Experiences: List the settings you worked in this year (delegation, hotel, Capitol, courtroom, press room, a real official's office). Which one changed you most?

Close with what you will do next: a bill for next year, an office to run for, a real issue to carry outside the program.

4. Advisor Verification Letter

To the [School] Seal of Civic Readiness Committee:

I am the advisor of the [delegation name] delegation of YMCA Youth and Government. I verify that [student], grade [], participated in the program during the [year] program year for a total of [] documented hours, as shown in the attached log, which I have initialed. [Student]'s roles included [roles]. The attached artifacts are [student]'s own work. [Student] completed the attached reflective [essay / presentation] on [date].

Advisor name, title, YMCA, phone, email, signature, date.

5. Connecticut Note

For Connecticut's seal, this portfolio documents involvement in a civic organization, one of the law's examples of a civic engagement project, and the four-domain reflection can serve as portfolio evidence of civics proficiency. Criteria come from the State Department of Education; confirm with the district.