

USCIS Citizenship and Integration Grant Program

Promising Practices

Organization Name:	Instituto del Progreso Latino
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Project-Based Learning: Create and Share a Citizenship Book

Instituto del Progreso Latino (Instituto) is an experienced provider of citizenship instruction under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. Over the years, Instituto citizenship instructors have implemented project-based learning activities to help students learn about civics (U.S. history and government) and English. One such activity requires

each student to create a scrapbook about the [100 civics questions and answers](#) for the naturalization test and present it to the class in English. Instituto’s citizenship book is an engaging project-based learning activity that is well-suited for students at or above the high-beginning English as a Second Language (ESL) level.

Purpose

Instituto developed the citizenship book project to encourage students to study for the naturalization test outside of the classroom. As they create their books, students build unique memories and associations that help them to retain the citizenship content. The

presentation component of this activity allows students to practice speaking English, which is an important part of the naturalization interview. Instituto recommends this activity for students who have been assessed at or above the high beginning ESL level.

Process

During the first week of class, the instructor introduces the citizenship book project to students and explains the purpose of the activity. The instructor should make sure

that students understand that they should work on their citizenship books primarily at home. The instructor also sets student expectations about the presentation and the

project due date. During the introduction, students look at examples of citizenship books created in previous classes and consider what images and words they would like to include in their own books.

Students develop their citizenship books over the course of the class term. Some students create their citizenship books from photo albums or thrift store scrapbooks. Other students choose to make their own books out of paper or photocopies. In the book, students paste images related to the 100 civics questions and answers for the naturalization test. Rather than creating a page for each one of the questions, students create pages based on naturalization test question themes, such as geography, elected officials or famous citizens. Students find images in magazines, books, and on websites. In addition to images, some students add captions, labels or sentences to their citizenship books using the [English vocabulary for the naturalization test](#).

Although it is not required, some students bring a draft of their citizenship book to class to get feedback from the instructor. The instructor reviews the images inside the citizenship book to make sure they correspond to the naturalization test questions. The instructor also

reviews words or sentences within the citizenship book for correct English vocabulary and grammar.

To ensure that students are on the right track, the instructor provides limited classroom time for students to work on their citizenship book projects. Students are allowed to work in groups and take advantage of time in the computer lab. As the class draws to a close, the instructor encourages students to practice their citizenship book presentation at home. Instituto instructors find that students who practice at home develop a better understanding of the vocabulary they need to use during the presentation.

During the last week of class, the instructor assigns each student a time to share their citizenship book with the class. Presentations range from five to 10 minutes. At their assigned time, each student stands in front of the class and presents their citizenship book. Students point to images in their citizenship books and explain why they chose to include those images. Rather than describing every page of their citizenship book, students highlight the sections that they find particularly significant. The instructor grades each presentation on quality and level of effort.

Challenges

The presentation part of this activity may be challenging for some students at the high beginning ESL level.

Overcoming Obstacles

By pre-testing all students before enrollment, Instituto ensures that students have the minimum English language skills necessary to present their citizenship book to the class. During the citizenship class, Instituto instructors work with students to improve oral English

skills so that they are prepared for their presentation. Finally, during the citizenship book presentation, instructors encourage students to present their books at their own pace and provide prompts to students that need assistance with English.

Outcomes

There are three main outcomes to the citizenship book project. First, creating a citizenship book contributes to increased student understanding and retention of civics (U.S. history and government) concepts. This activity also allows students to produce a book that they can use to study for the naturalization test after the class

has ended. Finally, the presentation component of this activity encourages students to practice speaking in English. The citizenship book is a great example of a project-based learning activity that can be implemented in a citizenship classroom.

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