

Measures of Youth Policy Arguments: A Project to Support Student Voice and Civic Participation

Overview

The Measure of Youth Policy Arguments in Authentic Contexts (MYPA) is an observation rubric that assesses the quality of presentations by young people about public policy issues. Specifically, MYPA evaluates presentations in terms of how they analyze a public problem, provide evidence about the nature or extent of the problem, and propose a compelling call to action to address the problem.

MYPA is intended to be used for formative and summative assessment for action civics projects that involve a cycle of problem-selection, research about the problem and solutions, formulation of a call to action, and ongoing reflection. Action civics cycles can be quick and intensive (5 full days) or long and iterative (one academic year). Action civics projects enable youth to work with peers to address public issues that are relevant to their lives; students gain practice navigating complex systems and developing evidence-based arguments to influence policy. Such projects are consistent with recommendations by the Civic Mission of the Schools (www.civicmissionofschools.org) and meet several of the Common Core standards.

Teachers and community-based educators will be able to use the MYPA rubric to guide young people in preparing for their presentations and to give them feedback to improve. We anticipate that researchers will be able to use the rubric to assess presentation quality in a reliable and valid manner. We are developing a freely accessible website that will share the validated rubric, video examples, and accompanying curriculum materials that support all phases of action civics: problem selection, original data collection and analysis, policy formulation, and final presentations.

MYPA is being developed and piloted by a research team led by Dr. Ben Kirshner, Faculty Director of CU Engage: Center for Community-Based Learning and Research at the University of Colorado Boulder (www.colorado.edu/cuengage). Co-leaders of the project are Dr. Shelley Zion (Professor of Urban Education at Rowan University) and Dr. Carlos Hipolito Delgado (Associate Professor of Education at the University of Colorado Denver). Graduate student researchers are Daniela DiGiacomo, Mónica Gonzalez, Ginnie Logan, and Erik Dutilly.

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For follow-up questions or comments please email Graduate Researcher Ginnie.Logan@colorado.edu.

Presentation and Delivery

	3 (highest quality)	2 (middle)	1 (lowest quality)	NA
Opening hook	Brief opener that draws the audience attention (<i>e.g. audience interaction, creative performance, personal testimony</i>).		The presentation does not include an opening hook.	
Topic	The introduction establishes the topic of the presentation.		The introduction does not establish the topic of the presentation.	
Speaker introductions	All of the presenters are introduced at the start.		Some presenters are not introduced at start.	
Clarity of speech	Presenters project their voices, speak clearly and use few filler words (e.g. like, um, so).	Quality of projection and clarity varies across speakers.	Most presenters do not project their voice or speak clearly. Lots of filler words are used.	
Body language and gesture	Presenters use body language to emphasize specific points or communicate ideas.	Body language does not add nor subtract from the message--if you did not notice body language give rating of 2.	Body language is distracting or in other ways distracts from the presentation.	
Eye contact	Eye contact is consistently directed at audience by the person speaking.	Eye contact is directed at audience about half the time by the person speaking.	Very little, if any, eye contact directed at audience by the person speaking.	NA
Commitment / passion*	Presenters show commitment to or passion for the content being presented.	Presenters are engaged but do not "own" their words or demonstrate passion for content.	Presenters appear uninterested in the material being presented or convey apathy towards message.	
Relationships among sections	A clear flow for the overall presentation. Each section builds on the prior one. There are no parts that seem disconnected/unrelated.	In general, there is a narrative flow, but 1 or 2 parts of the presentation seem unrelated.	The relationship between sections of the presentation is weak or appears disconnected.	

Collaboration

	3 (highest quality)	2 (middle)	1 (lowest quality)	NA
Talk time	Everyone on the stage delivers part of the presentation (even if length of speaking parts may vary).		Some team members speak for the whole group; remaining team members do not speak or just say their names.	
Transitions across speakers	Presenters coordinate their turns with each other and provide smooth transitions between speakers.	The presenters are mostly on the same page, but 1 or 2 transitions among speakers show confusion or uncertainty (such as a pause of more than 5 seconds showing uncertainty between turns).	There are 3 or more moments when speakers show uncertainty about whose turn it is and the transition is delayed by 5 or more seconds). In general speakers do not appear to be on the same page about the order of the presentation.	NA
Assistance if someone falters	If a speaker falters for more than 5 seconds, others lend assistance (such as whispering some guidance, showing physical gesture of support, or stepping in to help out by saying the point).		When a team member falters for more than 5 seconds, presenter is left to struggle for too long without help or is prematurely preempted by another speaker.	NA

Problem Identification

Does the presentation clearly identify a problem? If yes, write here: _____ (if there is more than one, write down the one that appears most closely addressed by the policy proposal).

Some advice about identifying the problem: Typically this is introduced early in the presentation; it is an issue that presenters argue is having a negative effect on them, and/or their school, and/their community, and/or the broader world. **In a high quality proposal, the “problem” is what the action proposal is meant to address.**

	3 (highest quality)	2 (higher quality)	1 (lower quality)	0 (lowest quality)
Naming the problem (e.g., gentrification, low quality education, bullying)	Presentation clearly names a problem and provides two or more types of evidence about the extent or importance of problem. Types could include: personal testimony, surveys, interviews, GIS, archival data).	Presentation names problem and provides one type evidence of extent or importance of problem(s)	Presentation names a problem, but offers no evidence of extent or importance of problem(s).	Presentation does not identify a problem or identifies too many problems that the focus of the presentation is unclear.
Was this evidence convincing?	Yes, the evidence presented was credible and convincing to me.	The evidence was lacking certain details or clarity, which made it just “sort of” convincing.	The presenters offered data but it was not credible or convincing.	The presentation did not offer any data or evidence.
Analyzing the problem	Problem identified, cause identified, and cause is situated in a larger policy or social context in a clear and explicit fashion.	Problem identified and cause of problem identified. Presentation does not clearly and explicitly situate the cause of the problem in a larger policy or social context.	Problem identified, no clear cause identified (none at all or too many unfocused and unrelated).	Presentation does not identify a problem or it identifies so many problems that the focus of the presentation is unclear.
Relevance to speakers	Description of the problem includes some discussion of relevance to the everyday lives or aspirations of the speakers			Description of the problem makes no reference to impact on everyday lives or dreams of the speakers

Research Methods

	3 (highest quality)	2 (middle)	1 (lowest quality)
Methods for data collection	Presenters talk, in detail, about their method(s) (e.g. literature review, personal testimony, survey, interview, observation), how they gathered the data, and type of data analysis.	Presenters mention their method(s) but do not provide detail how or why they went about their data collection or analysis.	Presenters do not mention their methods or mention any data to support argument
Presentation of results or findings	Thoroughly describe the data or results of their inquiry (such as extended quotes or survey results)	Presenters mention some data but do not provide detail.	Data informing or supporting the policy proposal are absent or unclear
Connection of methods to problem or policy	Youth provide reasons why their particular choice of research methods is relevant to understanding their problem and their policy proposal.		The research methods chosen do not appear relevant to either understanding the problem or the policy proposal.

Policy Proposal

This is an opportunity for young people to propose a new policy, change an existing policy, or hold people accountable for implementing a policy. A “policy” is a set of rules or commitments that govern a school, government, or organization, to which people in positions of authority can be held accountable. Successful policy proposals enable a youth group’s ideas to be sustained after individual team members have left the group. School policies include such issues such as rules for student behavior, time allowed for lunch, new classes offered, or requirements for curriculum. Cities make policy when they adopt rules affecting housing, transportation, parks, etc. or when they fund new programs such as youth services. States make policy when they set prices for college tuition, require or prohibit health education in schools, or allow oil drilling. These are all just examples of possible policies.

Write the proposed policy here:

If no policy is proposed, the team should score a “0” on all items in this section

	3 (highest quality)	2 (higher quality)	1 (lower quality)	0 (lowest quality)
Rationale for proposed policy	Presentation articulates a clear policy proposal and provides evidence or reasoning in support of the proposed policy.	Presentation articulates a clear policy proposal but offers incomplete or confusing evidence or reasoning in support of the proposed policy.	Presentation articulates a clear policy proposal but no evidence or reasoning is provided in support.	No policy proposal is offered.
Policy values framing	Presenters make an explicit connection between policy proposal and a set of values that are meant to resonate with the audience.		Presenters' do not make an explicit connection between the policy proposal and a set of values that are meant to resonate with the audience.	No policy proposal is offered.
Proposed implementation	Presenters explicitly articulate who is responsible for enacting policy and a timeline for when and how to implement policy.	The presentation explicitly articulates EITHER who is responsible for enacting the policy OR a timeline for policy implementation, but not both.	The presentation does not articulate who is responsible nor does it offer a timeline for policy implementation.	No policy proposal is offered.
Connection to the focal problem	Presenters explain how the policy proposal will address the focal problem.	The viewer can discern a relationship between policy proposal and focal problem, but this connection is not made explicit by the presenters.	The policy proposal does not relate to the focal problem or contradicts what was said earlier in the presentation about the problem.	No policy proposal is offered.
Call to action for in person audience	Audience of the presentation is offered clear action steps they should take to implement or support the proposed policy.	Audience of the presentation is asked to take action, but specific steps are vague or not directly related to advancing the proposed policy	Audience of the presentation is not asked to do anything.	No policy proposal is offered.

Responsiveness to Questions *(only applicable if audience asks questions)*

Item	3 (highest quality)	2 (lower quality)	1 (lowest quality)	NA
Overall response to questions	Response shows presenter understood the question; response addresses questions directly and are clear and coherent.	Presenters misunderstood some of the question or only respond to part of the question.	Presenters ignore the question, appear unable to respond, or respond in a hostile way.	NA
Response to data-related question	Speakers demonstrate confident and accurate knowledge of their data. Presenters do not need to rely on script to clarify methods or findings.	If asked a data related question, speakers reiterate prior evidence or prior points without innovation or expansion.	Speakers struggle to respond. May look for assistance from others, fumble, or appear to not understand their evidence.	NA
Response to disagreement or counter-argument	Presenters show they listened and understood the counter-argument; respond without relying on their script or outside help. Response expands on prior points or adds a new point.	Presenters respond by repeating their prior talking points.	Presenters fumble, do not respond, or look to an outside person for help.	NA