

Civic Engagement



***After-School Activities for
Citizenship, Leadership and Service***



MetLife Foundation

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4-H Afterschool

EXTRAORDINARY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

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JCPenney Afterschool Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that supports programs designed to keep kids safely and constructively engaged during out-of-school time. As part of its mission to ensure that all children have access to the world of opportunities that awaits them after school, the JCPenney Afterschool Fund provides vital financial support to 4-H Afterschool. This generous funding has enabled 4-H to create and launch 4-H Afterschool as a focused nationwide initiative.

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www.4husa.org

www.4hafterschool.org

www.fourhcouncil.edu

www.national4-hheadquarters.gov

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"The introductory material about civic engagement is very good as are the introductions to each of the chapters. I also like the inclusion of reflection questions and the "try this too" section at the end of most activities. These are especially important for use of activities with older children."

— Kendra L. Wells, Extension Specialist, 4-H Youth Development, University of Maryland Cooperative Extension

"It is highly evident that a tremendous amount of research, planning, thought and development has gone into the authoring of this [resource guide]. Consideration of the relevant and necessary concepts, developmental stages and national standards is clear and well-articulated. . . . The 4-H Civic Engagement [resource guide] clearly shows that its authors, researchers and leaders have worked well in a collaborative manner to execute a quality product."

— Karen McKnight Casey, Michigan State University, Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement



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What Is 4-H?

4-H is the Cooperative Extension System's dynamic, non-formal educational program for youth. It's known nationwide for engaging youth as leaders and giving them the power to take action. Through the Cooperative Extension System of land-grant universities, 4-H mobilizes trained, experienced and competent educators in more than 3,000 counties, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, Micronesia and the Northern Mariana Islands to support this community of young people who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.

The 4-H mission is to help youth reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults. The cooperation of more than 6.5 million youth and 538,000 volunteer leaders, along with 3,500 full-time professional staff, 106 state land-grant universities, state and local governments, private-sector partners, state and local 4-H foundations, National 4-H Council and National 4-H Headquarters at USDA make 4-H happen.

4-H stands for Head, Heart, Hands and Health.

THE 4-H PLEDGE

I pledge . . .
HEAD *my Head*
to clearer thinking
HEART *my Heart*
to greater loyalty
HANDS *my Hands*
to larger service
and
HEALTH *my Health*
to better living
for
my club
my community
my country
and
my world.

This resource guide is designed to be used by Extension professionals and volunteers who wish to deliver civic engagement programs for children in grades three through six in an after-school setting. It includes background information on civic engagement and activities that gives children the desire, skills and knowledge to become civically engaged.

The Issue of After-School Care

Care for school-age youth is a concern for millions of American families, particularly those in which the single parent or both parents are employed. With nearly 40 million children between the ages of five and 14, the United States is experiencing a burgeoning need for out-of-school programs.

Where young people spend their time, what they do and with whom they do it are important to their overall development. After-school hours represent either risk or opportunity. Youth who are unsupervised are much more likely to engage in activities that place them at risk. Programs in the out-of-school hours give youth safe, supervised places to spend time, along with chances to learn new skills, develop interests and spend meaningful time with peers and adults

Participation in high-quality after-school programs is linked with a lower incidence of problem behaviors, such as academic failure, substance use and delinquency. Furthermore, youth who attend these programs have demonstrated improved academic achievement (e.g., better school attendance and better grades) and improved social skills (e.g., positive relationships with adults, opportunities to make new friends and greater self-concept and self-esteem).

However, the challenges in running effective after-school programs are well-documented. Primary among these challenges are program quality, staff training, staff turnover and consistent funding.



After-school hours represent either risk or opportunity.

A broad range of activities and organizations are described as after-school programs, creating ambiguous definitions.* After-school programs don't always share a common time period (i.e., immediately following the school day), since the term is used broadly to refer to any programs outside of school hours. Additionally, programming in after-school hours is not solely the domain of any one group. The after-school landscape is populated by a myriad of program types, program locations and sponsoring organizations.

*Gootman, J. (2000). *Afterschool programs to promote child and adolescent development*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Science.

Why Should 4-H Be Involved in After-School Programs?

The current situation represents a tremendous opportunity to align existing youth development programs available through Extension/4-H with the need for after-school care, as well as an opportunity to create new program-delivery models.



A young person's healthy development is Extension/4-H's goal, and we have the resources to provide after-school opportunities and training for staff and volunteers who work with after-school programs. Extension/4-H helps youth develop into confident, capable citizens who contribute to their communities.

It's unlikely that Extension/4-H Youth Development professionals alone could meet the great need for after-school programs in our communities. However, many communities have existing programs that would benefit from our expertise and resources and welcome our partnership.

Elementary and secondary school enrollment is at record levels and is expected to increase every year through the early 2000s. The need for after-school programs will continue to increase.



Although states such as California and North Carolina have a long history of Extension leadership in after-school programming, school-age care education was emphasized nationally when Extension programming expanded in 1991. Thirty school-age childcare sites were funded as part of the Youth-at-Risk Initiative, a federal budget initiative that supported efforts to help high-risk youth. Two additional national initiatives (Children, Youth and Families at Risk [CYFAR] and Extension Cares...for America's Children and Youth) have been funded since then, devoting more Extension resources to after-school programs. Despite these efforts, 4-H has not been widely known in the after-school arena.

What Is 4-H Afterschool?

4-H Afterschool is designed to combine the resources of Extension/4-H with community-based organizations that provide after-school programs which address community needs. The 4-H Afterschool program helps increase the quality and availability of after-school programs by:

- Improving the ability of after-school program staff and volunteers (youth and adults) to offer high-quality care, education and developmental experiences for youth.
- Increasing the use of 4-H curricula in after-school programs.
- Organizing 4-H clubs in after-school programs.

4-H Afterschool offers support and training materials, including this resource guide, to help leaders teach quality program activities.



4-H Afterschool trains after-school staff and volunteers, develops quality programs and creates after-school communities of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.



The 4-H club operates within the structure of the community-based organization that sponsors the after-school program. This 4-H Afterschool club approach works best when the goals of the two organizations are compatible and both have a shared sense of ownership.

The implementation of the after-school program's 4-H club component can take various forms. For example, 4-H may be offered on a particular day of the week or selected projects may be offered. After-school educators may designate a specific time for club meetings, where youth say the 4-H pledge, officers lead and members make choices about activities to pursue. The person responsible for the 4-H club may be staff paid by Extension/4-H, staff of the organization (e.g., Boys and Girls Club) running the program or a volunteer (adult and/or youth).*

Starting 4-H clubs is a familiar part of the 4-H professional's job. Establishing a 4-H club in the after-school program setting, however, may present some new challenges because the after-school landscape has many out-of-school programs providers. Despite common elements, there is considerable variation among existing programs.

Thus, the approach can't be one size fits all. Extension/4-H staff must be creative, flexible and above all, able to listen when sites express needs. Despite these challenges, it's well worth the effort because county 4-H programs and after-school programs both benefit from working with new partners and new audiences. Of course, the ultimate beneficiaries are the youth.



*Any person who works with the 4-H club who is not paid by Extension/4-H funds is considered a volunteer. Thus, paid staff from other organizations are considered to be volunteers.

Key Elements of 4-H Afterschool

Certain key elements need to be in place to ensure 4-H Afterschool program consistency, including:

- Open and responsive communication between the local Extension/4-H office and the local 4-H club leadership.
- Diversity in 4-H club membership and leadership.
- Shared leadership responsibilities among adults, youth and children.
- Youth and adult partnerships that recognize individual interests, abilities and assets, along with a balance of strengths and weaknesses among and between members and leaders.
- Flexible and adaptable 4-H club leadership that considers individual situations.
- Rules that contribute to positive youth development and focus on such fundamental issues as safety and mutual respect.
- A healthy balance between cooperation and competition among the 4-H club's members.
- An atmosphere that encourages active participation of 4-H club members within and outside club boundaries.
- Clear understanding of the 4-H club's purposes, goals and expectations by members, parents and volunteers.
- Educational programs that use an experiential learning model.
- A system that recognizes volunteer and member accomplishments and contributions.



How to Use This Resource Guide

This resource guide is designed to be used by Extension/4-H professionals to help after-school staff and volunteers develop and deliver civic engagement programs for youth in grades three through six. For younger or older youth, the activities can be adapted to their age level.

Chapter One provides reasons why youth development organizations such as 4-H should be involved in after-school programs that focus on civic engagement. Chapter Two provides background information on the major civic engagement topics and includes an activity to develop a

definition of citizenship. Chapters Three through Seven provide activities that can be used to develop citizenship skills and enhance civic engagement in after-school settings. Chapter Eight provides information for promoting your 4-H Afterschool program and strategies for building family and community partnerships. A resources section is included as a helpful appendix to link programmers to relevant web sites.



Other Materials in the 4-H Afterschool Series

4-H Afterschool offers seven other resource guides.

- *Starting 4-H Clubs in After-School Programs* helps after-school sites begin 4-H clubs.
- *Guiding Growth: Training Staff for Working with Youth in After-School Programs* is used to directly train after-school program staff, helping them increase their capacities to provide quality care for children.
- *Extraordinary Learning Opportunities: A Sampler of 4-H Afterschool Activities* is an excellent sampling of 4-H programming and activities.
- *Increasing the Quantity of After-School Programs: A Guide for Extension Professionals to Establish Community-Based After-School Programs* provides helpful hints for analyzing the need for more after-school programs and the process for establishing new community-based, after-school programs.
- *Teens as Volunteer Leaders—Recruiting and Training Teens to Work with Younger Youth in After-School Programs* provides a step-by-step training guide.
- *4-H Youth Development Programming in Underserved Communities—Reaching Out to and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Audiences* helps after-school providers and Extension professionals expand 4-H clubs and other programming into new areas.
- *Designing Workforce Preparation Programs—A Guide for Reaching Elementary and Middle School*

Youth After School gives after-school professionals some potential resources and information about incorporating workforce preparation skills into everyday programming.

Each of these resources can be used independently. They also work well together during orientation and training of after-school professionals and volunteers. Visit www.4hafterschool.org for more information about these resource guides.





DEVELOPING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Chapter

1

Positive Youth Development

While developing a program for and with youth, it's important to reflect on the meaning of positive youth development and how to incorporate the concept into the design, implementation and evaluation of the program. Meeting the needs of young people and building competencies is the overarching framework of positive youth development.

WHAT IS POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT?

Positive youth development is by definition the process of growing up and developing one's capacities in positive ways. It's a process of mental, physical and social growth. This process occurs in schools, youth programs, communities and families. It's affected by the customs and culture of the community. Wherever and however a young person is touched, whether directly (peers) or indirectly (media), youth development takes place. All young people seek ways to meet their basic needs and build the competencies they need to succeed.



Child Development

ABOUT THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL CHANGES

When working with school-aged children, it's important to think about the developmental changes these young people are going through. It's also necessary to consider how these changes affect how you work with children in this age group. Keeping children's development in mind will help ensure fun and learning for all—adults and children alike!

The table that follows (Junge 2005) shows the characteristics related to physical, social, emotional and intellectual development during grades K-3 and 4-6, along with the implications these characteristics have for working with children. Individual differences play a big role in how children behave and what they like to do. Sometimes children's development is uneven. For example, while physically a child may look older than other children who are the same age, he or she may lag behind peers in social skills.

Furthermore, children are influenced by the people and the places in their lives: their families, friends, schools and communities. Another important point to remember is that even though we look at specific aspects of the child's development to understand it better, each child is a whole child. The children who are in your clubs, groups and classrooms are a complete package.



Child Development



TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

Grades K - 3

CHARACTERISTICS

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

PHYSICAL

Growing slowly, just learning to master physical skills. Can control large muscles better than small muscles.

Projects and meal times are messy. Activities that encourage use of large muscles, such as running, playing games, etc. are good.

SOCIAL

Learning how to be friends; may have many friends. Fighting occurs but doesn't last long. Toward the end of this phase, boys and girls separate.

Small-group activities let children practice their social skills, but still allows for individual attention. Role playing helps children gain empathy. Encourage children to participate in mixed-gender activities.

EMOTIONAL

Are self-centered. Seek approval from adults and go out of their way to avoid punishment. Are sensitive to criticism; don't like to fail.

Be positive! Plan activities where everyone can experience some success. Foster cooperation, not competition.

INTELLECTUAL

Are concrete thinkers—base thinking in reality. Can't multi-task well. Are more interested in doing things than getting a good result at the end.

Plan lots of activities that take a short time to finish. Focus on the process rather than the final product. Allow for exploration and inquiry.

Child Development

TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN (CONT.)

Grades 4 - 6	
CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING
<p>PHYSICAL Growth continues at a steady rate. Small muscles have developed so they can do activities such as hammering, sawing, playing musical instruments, etc. By the end of this period, they may be as coordinated as adults, although lapses of awkwardness are common.</p>	<p>Provide for lots of physical involvement. Use hands-on activities that allow youth to make and do things.</p>
<p>SOCIAL Peer influence grows. To be accepted by one's peer group is rewarded. Peer group can become a club, gang or secret society. Prejudice can develop during this period. Independence from adults is increasing. Discusses and evaluates others, develops a concept of fair or unfair as relates to others.</p>	<p>Provide activities through clubs and group activities. Use activities that allow the youth to make decisions about what they make, do and use. Group youth in same-sex groups when possible.</p>
<p>EMOTIONAL Growing independence. Beginning of disobedience, back-talk and rebelliousness. Common fears are the unknown, failure, death, family problems and non-acceptance. Sense of humor develops. Concept of self is enhanced by feelings of competence. Strong attachment to their own sex and antagonism toward opposite sex.</p>	<p>Don't compare youth to one another. Emphasize progress and achievement.</p>
<p>INTELLECTUAL Reading becomes an individual experience. Abstract thought is possible and plans can extend over several weeks. Activities can be evaluated with insight. Attention span increases. Ability to understand "Why?"</p>	<p>Use simple, short instructions. Include real-life objects when teaching and involve their senses when possible.</p>

The Issue of Civic Engagement

WHY IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Active citizens are the building blocks of our democracy, and 4-H recognizes the importance of developing good citizens among our youth. A democracy is only as strong as the citizens that make it up, and strength comes from having the knowledge, skills and attitudes to work for a common good.

Citizenship means enjoying certain rights and accepting certain responsibilities. As citizens in the United States, we all benefit from the freedoms provided to us by the Constitution. But enjoying these privileges is only part of being a citizen. We also have to give back to ensure that our rights continue to exist. As John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.”

“American youth attributes much more importance to arriving at driver’s-license age than at voting age.”—Marshall McLuhan

An important part of being civically engaged is asking what you can do for your country, as well as your school, neighborhood, town and county. In other words, civic engagement means having responsibility. We are responsible for upholding our democracy and making life better for ourselves and for others.

There are certain mandatory responsibilities that all of us, as Americans, are required to fulfill. These include obeying laws, paying taxes, serving on a jury, serving as a witness in a trial and registering for the draft. Voting in elections is also an expect-

tation, though not a requirement. These are the bare minimum responsibilities of citizens. But being truly engaged involves more. Civic engagement demands learning and action. It’s this commitment to learning and action that is implied by civic engagement in 4-H Youth Development.

This curriculum represents a new direction in youth civic engagement. Civic education has long been seen as a means for strengthening our democracy, and educators are increasingly pursuing programs to deliver this content to young people.



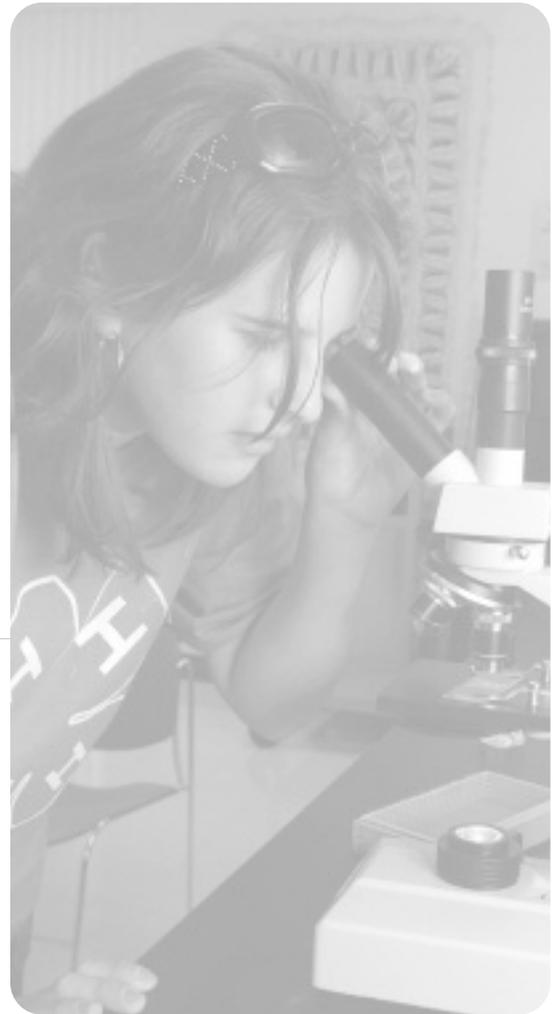
The Issue of Civic Engagement

The results, thus far, are mixed: Youth participation in community service is high, yet youth interest in politics is at an all-time low.

This phenomenon can partly be explained by the focus of most civic education programs, which often emphasize character building, leadership training and volunteering in community activities. These areas are important pieces of becoming an active, responsible citizen, and many young people have benefited from them.

Often missing from these programs, however, is a look at the bigger picture—helping youth understand how their volunteerism addresses a public issue and how that issue is dealt with on a political level. This

requires youth to take a deeper look at the underlying causes behind the issues they deal with, and it encourages them to work toward a more sustainable solution through the political process. For example, traditional civic education programs might encourage youth to donate canned goods to a food drive for people with limited resources. This curriculum would instead help youth explore the issue of poverty in their community and guide them to understanding and addressing this issue at the public policy level. This focus on the political side of civic engagement is particularly relevant. Recent findings suggest that when young people participate in the political process, they are more likely to become politically active citizens as adults.



The Issue of Civic Engagement



THE POLITICAL ROLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Youth clubs and organizations inevitably have a political role. Whether intentionally or not, youth clubs encourage and reinforce a certain set of values and morals. Young people learn about citizenship and character according to their group's principles. For example, 4-H members make the 4-H pledge at every club meeting: "I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living for my club, my community, my country and my world." In this way, youth learn how to function in a community and conform to a certain definition of citizenship, providing a solid foundation for the political system. That is, even if a youth group is not founded around the idea of civic engagement, it still has a uniquely civic role in the lives of its members.

WHY SHOULD 4-H BE INVOLVED IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

There are a variety of reasons that 4-H is in a position to be a natural leader in civic engagement. Being included and involved in one's community is a fundamental philosophy of 4-H, whose essential elements include belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Kress 2004). Furthermore, the status of 4-H as an extracurricular education program helps to avoid many of the problems that civic engagement faces in formal education: a de-emphasis on civics due to high-stakes testing, resistance to alternative approaches and a lack of funding for extracurricular activities.

It's therefore the responsibility of youth organizations to define a responsible version of citizenship. The norms that are established and promoted by the organization should encourage good character, tolerance and participation. These are important considerations regardless of the type of youth organization, from rabbit-raising clubs to theatre troupes. Groups are political by nature, and group membership teaches young people political attitudes. Incorporating activities that highlight responsible civic engagement is a way to ensure that your youth organization is sending the right message about citizenship.

The Issue of Civic Engagement

FORMING PARTNERSHIPS

Youth civic engagement requires collective action. Young people don't learn what it means to be part of their democracy by working alone. An important form of partnership is the one between youth and adults. This can encompass one or several adults providing guidance and support to a youth group or a youth group cooperating with an adult organization. Adult groups are often open to youth involvement for the unique perspective that young people bring. For younger children, adults can serve as role models for their development of values, career interests and self-concept. The youth group or group leader should actively seek out individual adults or organizations that share common interests.

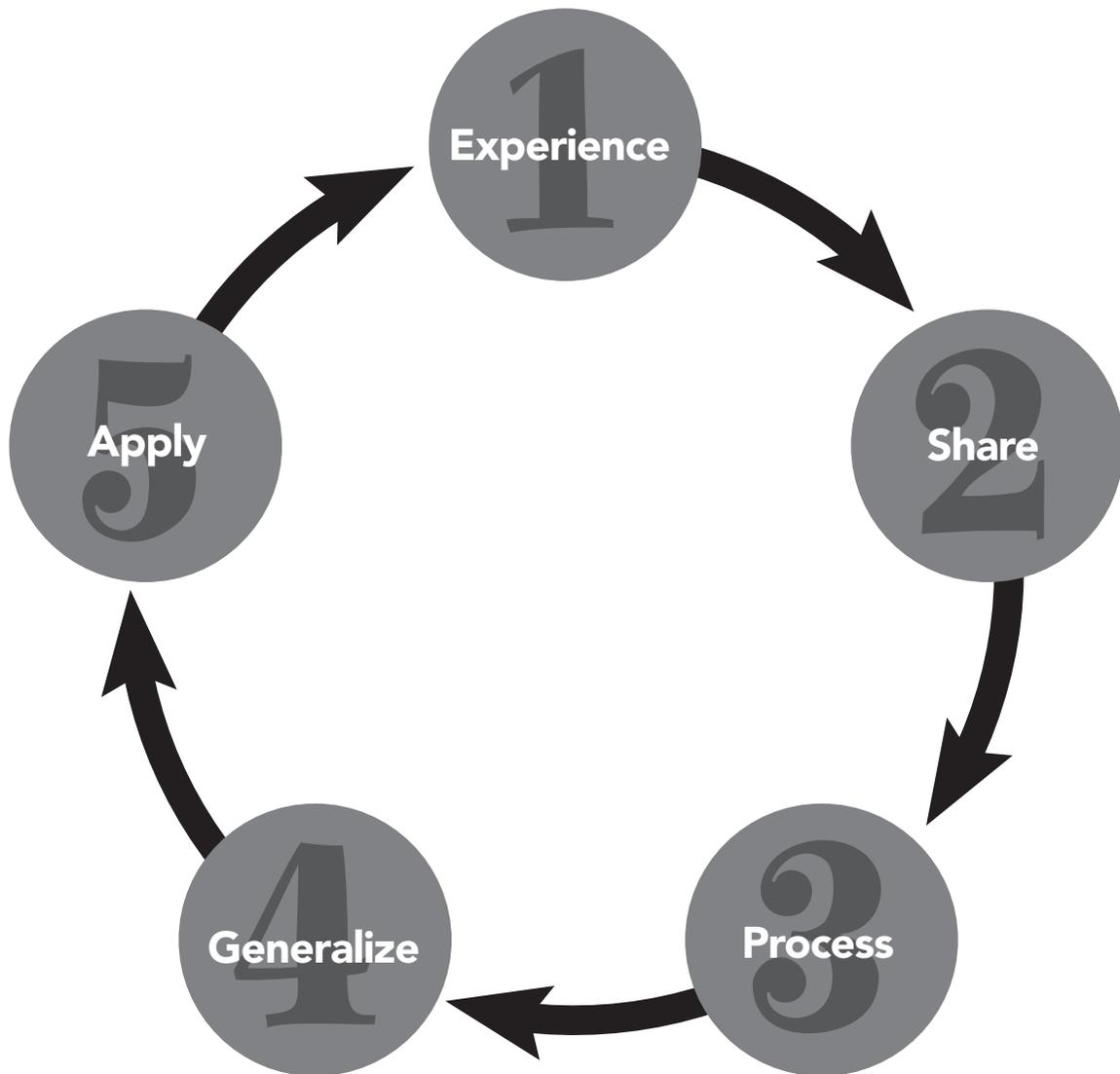
A particularly effective youth-adult partnership is one that links youth to an official governmental body. This provides a unique opportunity for young people to see the real-life figures behind the government and be involved in the political process. It's recommended that the group leader contact local government officials prior to beginning the program to determine if there is interest in collaboration. Attending local government board meetings or scheduling appointments with individual board members are both effective ways to introduce the idea to government officials.

IMPROVED CAREER EXPECTATIONS

Research has shown that civic engagement not only improves young people's sense of adequacy and capableness, but also their future career expectations. A commitment to helping others and involvement in community groups may lead urban youth of color to set higher career goals for themselves. Instilling the values of civic engagement at an early age is a good way to ensure a continued sense of empowerment. In this way, young people may improve their career development as they learn to become more civically engaged.



Experiential Learning Model



Pfeiffer, J.W., & Jones, J.E., "Reference Guide to Handbooks and Annuals"
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Experiential Learning Model

The Experiential Learning Model is used in multiple ways. It can be used as an overall structure of a program and also as a lesson plan design. This can be confusing at times, especially when a clear and clean outline of models is desired. However, in youth development work, the program design and lesson plan delivery are so intertwined that it's difficult to tell where the experiential model starts and stops. Youth development programs are created to ensure that young people actively learn through hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. Curricular materials, programs and events are developed and designed to provide adults and professionals who work with young people the tools they need to offer a *Do-Reflect-Apply* experience. In this type of experience, young people complete five important steps.

DO

- Young people experience an activity which involves exploring or discovering something related to the topic of interest or expertise.

REFLECT

- Young people share by describing what happened or what they experienced. When young people share what they've learned, they stimulate their own growth and that of group members as well.
- Young people process what they've learned and share to look for patterns or themes, with the goal of building a bridge to new knowledge and skills.

APPLY

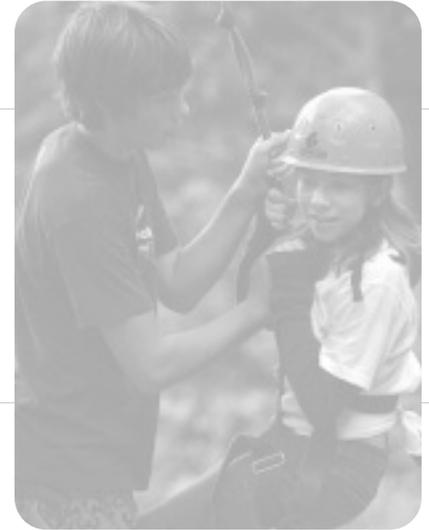
- Young people generalize from this experience the implications for their own lives, for those of fellow community members and society as a whole.
- Young people apply or think about what can be done with their newly acquired knowledge or skills.



Experiential Learning Model

Each of these elements is accomplished through positive and appropriate questions, encouragement and support by the caring adult or youth leader of the group. The overall goal of the experiential learning process is to provide young people with positive learning experiences. Youth think through what they have learned and understand how the information connects with other situations. Offering experiential learning opportunities that are developmentally age-appropriate and appealing to young people leads to environments proven to foster positive youth development. The learning becomes child-centered and more fun for the learner and the facilitator.

There are drawbacks to using the experiential learning model. It seems less orderly and less comfortable for some facilitators. It requires more preparation and guidance. As you go through the process, there are often many correct responses, which can be a challenge for those looking strictly for a right or wrong answer (Maxa et al. 2003).



Experiential Learning Model

TIPS ON FACILITATING REFLECTION

Group discussions tips:

- Use seven seconds of silence. People need time to reflect and think about a topic, some more than others. Once a question is asked, silently count to seven, and more than likely someone will respond. Giving young people time to think and express their answers may mean waiting quietly and encouraging youth.
- Don't answer the youth's questions. Acknowledge every answer so that the young person doesn't feel that he or she has failed to please you. The questions are deliberately open-ended to allow for a range of individual answers, which you should receive openly even if they differ from your opinions.

- Encourage young people to think deeply. Short or superficial responses could indicate that they need to think in greater depth about a question. Use follow-up comments to help them transfer their experiences into understanding, such as, "Can you talk more about that?" "Would you share an example of what you mean?" "Why do you think that is so?" "What about another perspective?"
- Find ways to give everyone a chance to share their ideas and get involved. Think of creative ways to do this without calling on someone by name (participants may not be ready to respond or may not want to respond to a particular question).
- If there are four or five questions you want the group to respond to, write them down on colored note cards. Use different colors to represent questions ranging from easiest to most difficult. (For example, the easiest question might be blue, a more difficult one might be yellow and so on.) Pass these out to group

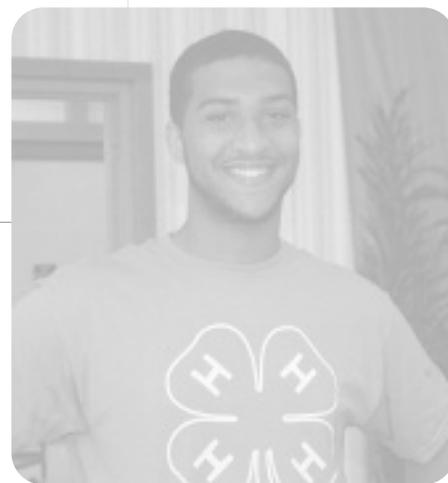
members and start by asking a member with the easiest color to read his or her question out loud. Continue and end with the most difficult. The color-coded cards help guide the participants from simple thinking about the issue to more complex reflection.

- If you have a group of more than 10 participants, break them into smaller teams to process questions. Bring teams back together and facilitate a discussion on the high points. This may require one or more facilitators. However, it allows for more interaction between participants.
- Take into account different learning styles when brainstorming ways to carry out reflection. Besides the usual activities such as journaling or responding to discussion questions, young people can create songs, write poetry, develop a wall mural or quilt, write a letter to themselves, do a skit, write a radio or television program and record it or create a photo display of the entire project from the first step where community needs were determined to the final application. Think creatively about the entire design of the reflective process.



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PREPARING FOR
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Chapter

2

Key Components to Programming

"Civic education leads to a healthier democracy."

— Michigan Civic Education Youth Advisory Committee Members

HOW IS THIS MANUAL DESIGNED?

This manual is designed to provide background information in civic engagement and to supply corresponding activities for after-school programs. Chapter Two provides a framework and background information on civic engagement and includes an activity to develop a definition of citizenship. Chapters Three through Seven include activities that correspond to the five topics of civic engagement described below. Chapter Eight provides information about promoting your 4-H Afterschool program and strategies for building family and community partnerships. A resources section contains web sites that can be used to expand programming.



Key Components to Programming

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

The terms *civic engagement* and *citizenship* can be used interchangeably. Being civically engaged means different things to different people. Some consider a good citizen to be someone who has strong character, donates to charity and volunteers to help others; others say a good citizen is one who takes an interest in understanding social issues and concerns; and still others would describe a good citizen as one who has the skills and knowledge to actively influence decision making and public policy. Because of these diverse ideas of what it means to be a good citizen, it's important to consider a broad definition of civic engagement, including the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a good citizen should have. Therefore, we can say that civic engagement requires competency in five areas, or across **five major topics**:

- **Character** - Moral and civic virtues, such as a concern for the rights and welfare of others.
- **Knowledge of government** – An understanding of the structure and processes of government and community organizations.
- **Community service learning** – An awareness of public and community issues, and participation in service to address problems.
- **Public policy** - The skills, knowledge and commitment to influence decision making and public policy.
- **Issues** – An awareness and understanding of public issues, how they are connected across local, national and global levels and how one affects and is affected by them.



Key Components to Programming

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IS LEARNED

These criteria for civic engagement are not easily met. It takes courage, hard work and commitment to be a good citizen. But even the most courageous, hardworking and committed people must still have educational experiences that help them develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for putting citizenship into action.

What then needs to be learned to meet our definition of citizenship? It helps to think of competencies, or specific learning outcomes, that youth development programs can encourage. Some examples of civic engagement competencies follow. The five major civic engagement topics are inserted into Table 2 as categories of content, and the areas of competency—knowledge, skills and attitudes—are listed above these to create a framework for thinking about what responsible citizens should be learning.

*“Between 1988 and 1998, the proportion of fourth-graders who reported taking Social Studies daily fell from 49% to 39%.” — Weiss, Lutkus, Grigg and Niemi (as cited in *The Civic Mission of Schools* 2003, 15)*



Key Components to Programming

TABLE 2: COMPETENCIES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPIC	KNOWLEDGE	SKILLS	ATTITUDES
Character	Understanding of self-identity	Dialogue with others about different points of view	Concern for the rights and welfare of others
Knowledge of Government	Understanding of government structure and processes	Ability to define civic engagement	Appreciation of the importance of voting
Community Service Learning	Knowledge of service activity model	Asset and problem assessment in the community	Trust in the community
Public Policy	Awareness of community issues	Petition writing	Confidence in ability to make changes
Issues	Knowledge of how global/national issues affect local issues	Ability to find information	Respect for diversity

The competencies provided in Table 2 are just a few examples of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to become civically engaged. All of the things to be learned to practice good citizenship may seem overwhelming, but an effective civic education program can encourage all of these competencies and more, and make it fun in the process. By looking at Table 2, you can see that civic engagement involves both learning and doing. 4-H Youth Development believes that it's very important for youth to experience the ideas and principles that they learn.

Getting Started

This chapter includes an activity to introduce the concept of citizenship or civic engagement. It's recommended that the activity, "A Good Citizen is . . .," be completed before other activities.

Table 3, which follows, features a planning matrix that provides an overview of the major civic engagement topics and corresponding activities for each topic. Chapters Three through Seven each correspond to one of the five topics described earlier. They are structured to include background information and activities to use in your after-school program. The activities are presented in user-friendly, lesson-plan format.

Each activity indicates the associated major civic engagement topic(s), as well as the life skills and standards for civics and government education that are addressed by the activity. Life skills are based on the *Targeting Life Skills Model*, which describes 35 abilities individuals can learn to help them to be successful and productive. The voluntary standards for civics and government are drawn from the

Center for Civic Education's *National Standards for Civics and Government*, which has provided leadership in redefining the content of classroom civics and government education. The Center for Civic Education has created standards for three different grade clusters (K-4, 5-8, 9-12). The K-4 and 5-8 standards are referenced in the activities in this curriculum.



Getting Started

TABLE 3: PLANNING MATRIX

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPIC	CORRESPONDING ACTIVITIES
Chapter Three Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting With Character • Shared Values and Symbols • The Great Seal of the United States
Chapter Four Knowledge of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government is Us • So You Want to Be a United States Citizen • Citizenship Bowl
Chapter Five Community Service Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant Service Project • Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map
Chapter Six Public Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Becomes a Law • Petition Mission
Chapter Seven Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You Have to Represent • The Campaign Game • City Planning

“No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline.” — Kofi Annan

ACTIVITY: A Good Citizen Is... (simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants discuss citizenship and what it means to be a good citizen. They draw pictures of what a good citizen looks like.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Define *citizenship* and *good citizenship* and communicate the importance of citizenship.
- Are introduced to the five major civic engagement topics (character, knowledge of government, community service learning, public policy and issues) and include them in their own definition of citizenship.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking; communication

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Citizenship

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.A. (K-4) and Standard V.A. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

Review activity directions and materials.

During the meeting

1. Read the dictionary definition of citizenship aloud (see handout *Defining Citizenship*). Ask participants what they think citizenship is. Let them discuss, then ask what they think it means to be a good citizen.
2. Ask participants to think about examples of when they or someone they know have been good citizens. Next, give participants newsprint and crayons or markers and ask them to write a definition of citizenship. Work with participants to help generate ideas, giving ample time to complete definitions. (This activity could also be done in teams of two or three.)
3. Ask everyone to share their definitions of citizenship. Record items from everyone's definition on newsprint. As you record responses, try to categorize them into five different unlabeled columns based on the major civic engagement topics outlined in the beginning of this chapter and also in the *Defining Citizenship* handout: (1) character, (2) knowledge of government, (3) community service learning, (4) public policy and (5) issues. If any of the participant responses don't naturally fit into one of these five categories, create a new column(s) if necessary. After you have recorded all responses, label each of the five columns according to the corresponding principle of citizenship.
4. Create a group definition of citizenship using the categorized responses. How does the group definition compare to the individual definitions? Ask participants to talk about the similarities or differences.
5. Explain to participants that the purpose of this activity is to understand and examine a broad definition of citizenship. People use many definitions of citizenship, and we intend to explore a broader view of citizenship than what is in the dictionary. Allow participants to offer their own opinions. Ask participants to give examples of when they or someone they know have been actively civically engaged by being a good citizen.
6. Give participants paper and crayons or markers. Ask them to draw a picture of what a good citizen looks like. Encourage them to be creative and use the five major civic engagement topics as a guide. Give everyone time to complete his or her sketch.
7. Ask everyone to share their drawings. Discuss any common themes from the sketches.
8. After everyone has shared, distribute the *Defining Citizenship* handouts. Ask participants to take handouts home to share and discuss the idea of a good citizen with parents or guardians.
9. Post the drawings in the room for reference and inspiration as you progress through additional activities.

ACTIVITY: A Good Citizen Is...

TRY THIS, TOO

- Let participants create a citizenship collage that includes depictions of all five principles of civic engagement.
- Arrange for participants to create and maintain citizenship portfolios in which they can record their activities and accomplishments related to citizenship and civic engagement.
- Let participants use craft materials to make Good Citizenship greeting cards to share with family and friends. During a national holiday that has a citizenship theme (such as the 4th of July, Memorial Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day or Veterans Day) have participants incorporate the theme into cards.

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions:

SHARE

- What did you like or not like about this activity?
- Is it easy or difficult to be a good citizen?

PROCESS

- What did you learn about being a good citizen?
- Why do you think people have different definitions of being a good citizen?

GENERALIZE

- What can you do to be a good citizen?

APPLY

- How can you practice being a good citizen in your home, school, community or here in the after-school club?

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Newsprint
- Easel or tape for displaying newsprint
- Markers or crayons
- Photocopy of handout *Defining Citizenship* for each participant

TIME

30 to 45 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs



HANDOUT: Defining Citizenship

Dictionary Definitions of Citizenship

Citizenship: Function: *noun*; 1: the status of being a citizen; 2a: membership in a community (as a college) **b:** the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community. (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary April 6, 2007)

Citizenship: Relationship between an individual and a state in which an individual owes allegiance to that state and in turn is entitled to its protection. Citizenship implies the status of freedom with accompanying responsibilities. (Encyclopedia Britannica Online April 6, 2007)



HANDOUT: Defining Citizenship

NEW DEFINITION

Being a good citizen or being civically engaged means different things to different people. Some consider a good citizen to be someone who has strong character, does community service or gives money to charity. Others say a good citizen votes, knows what is going on in their community and city and takes an interest in what is happening around them. Still others would describe a good citizen as one who has the skills and knowledge to influence government officials. Because of these many different ideas, it's important to consider a broad definition of citizenship and civic engagement, including the following:

- **Character** – A good citizen practices moral and civic virtues, such as being honest and trustworthy, being respectful of other people across differences, being responsible and helping to take care of the community, being fair to others, showing concern for others by sharing and doing something for the community and learning about and practicing civic engagement.
- **Knowledge of government** – A good citizen learns how to vote. He or she learns about local, state and national government and non-profit agencies, what they do and how what they do affects citizens.
- **Community service learning** – A good citizen understands the importance of community service and then actively participates to help solve a community problem.
- **Public policy** – A good citizen learns how and why people influence others and how this influence is related to local, state and national government decision making.
- **Issues** – A good citizen learns about local issues and how they are connected across local, national and global levels.

For you to do at home

Ask the adults in your family how they would define the term being a good citizen. Write their definitions on the lines below. Are they similar to or different from what you thought?

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CHARACTER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Chapter

3

Character and Civic Engagement

"An elder Native American was teaching his grandson about life. He said to him, 'A fight is going on inside me . . . it is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, sharing, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, friendship, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.'

'This same fight is going on inside you, and inside every other person, too,' he added.

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, 'Which wolf will win?'

The old Cherokee simply replied. . . 'The one you feed.'" – Author Unknown



This story illustrates that learning the values which are the foundation for a strong character is something that we consciously decide to do. Making the decision to do so is an important part of civic engagement. Character can be described as a combination of moral virtue and action to promote the rights and welfare of others.

Character and Civic Engagement

BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHARACTER

Character education seeks to strengthen both individuals and communities, and thus is central to civic engagement. Research on character education has attempted to identify several specific traits or characteristics that define good character. A common definition of character education rests on a set of core values that should be actively promoted in young people: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. These values work together to help young people develop personal integrity and moral virtue.

- Trustworthiness – We all rely on help and support from others. Trust means having confidence in others to be honest and truthful and also making our expectations for honesty and truthfulness clear.
- Respect – In our climate of cultural diversity, it's essential to honor differences and have a concern for the rights of others.
- Responsibility – We have responsibilities toward ourselves and toward our communities. Young people should be encouraged to do what they believe is right as a duty to themselves and people around them.
- Fairness – What do people deserve? Understanding that people have different conceptions of good and bad is part of developing a sense of justice.
- Caring – Cruelty and insensitivity are learned behaviors. Cultivating a caring attitude means reinforcing attitudes of kindness, empathy and giving.
- Citizenship – By identifying our rights and responsibilities in our communities, we develop a personal definition of citizenship.

These values are the learned outcomes of character education. Embracing these attitudes is the foundation of character. From here, youth are better equipped to put these values into action.

Character and Civic Engagement

PROMOTING THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF OTHERS

People have different beliefs, values, personalities and perspectives and come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. As civically engaged individuals, it's our responsibility to recognize, understand and appreciate these differences—and to work to understand how the impact of these differences, based on race, gender, class and other differences, may influence people's experience of what *citizenship* means to them.

Citizenship is not simply promoting your own values and views; it requires a sense of caring, empathy and concern for others. Good citizens have the courage to stand up for what they believe in, and they also have the courage to stand up for the rights of others. A commitment to the common good is of primary importance. But to understand and work for the common good, one must be willing to build trust by listening and respecting other people's ideas and realities.

Strong, thriving communities draw upon the talents and gifts of diverse people. Such communities value the wisdom and experiences of all members and mobilize the strengths, skills and talents of diverse groups (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Diversity is seen as *value-added* and as an asset to the community. Building relationships across differences is key to developing partnerships and efforts committed to working for the common good.



Character and Civic Engagement

LEARNING BEGINS WITH ME

A good way to deepen our understanding of issues of diversity and inclusion is to commit to learning more about ourselves. It's important to have a good understanding of our own personality, beliefs and cultural background as a first step in being open to recognizing, understanding and appreciating the perspectives and differences of others. If we know ourselves—including our preferred styles of communication, values and reasons behind our beliefs—we may be more open to learning about the differences of others. This can lead to mutually respectful interpersonal relationships. Self-awareness also encourages us to learn about the biases, assumptions and stereotypes we may hold about people different from ourselves. Learning to unlearn misinformation we may have about ourselves and other people is essential to good citizenship and working for the common good.



Character and Civic Engagement

COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

One way to learn more about ourselves and about others is to engage in dialogue. We live in a debate culture that tends to encourage thinking toward one “right answer” and often creates division and arguments among people. Dialogue is different. Dialogue fosters understanding by encouraging the sharing of multiple perspectives while those involved remain open to learning and growth. Engaging in dialogue around complex issues such as those related to citizenship allows people to explore common ground from which they might work for positive change together.

Once we have an understanding of ourselves, we can begin thinking about how to best understand and respect others. Oftentimes, when we hear an opinion that is different from ours, our first reaction is to either dismiss it completely or argue against it. A responsible citizen will instead *listen* to understand this differing viewpoint. This is not to say that citizenship requires abandoning your opinions for the sake of others. Standing up for what you believe in is an important component of citizenship. Indeed, sometimes the result of understanding another’s perspective is simply agreeing to disagree. However, a citizen who displays tolerance and a respect for diversity will seek to find common ground between varying opinions. The differences are not battles to be won, but opportunities to learn and work toward solutions that benefit the most people possible.



ACTIVITY: Acting With Character (simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants are introduced to the widely shared values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, which are qualities important to the development of character. Participants discuss how these qualities are guidelines for ethical decision making and act out vignettes in which they demonstrate the importance of character in solving problems.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Identify qualities that exemplify the widely shared values of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.
- Recognize behavior that illustrates these values.
- Demonstrate approaches to a problem in which examples of core ethical values are not used.
- Demonstrate approaches to the same problem in which examples of core ethical values are used.
- Explain the importance of character for themselves and for a true and just democracy.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Responsible citizenship; character

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Character

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Hang prepared newsprint around the room.

During the meeting

1. Begin the discussion by calling participant attention to the newsprint sheets displayed around the room. Explain that each sheet is headed with a widely shared value (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship) which demonstrates strong character. These values help us to make sound ethical decisions.
2. For each value, ask participants what it means to them. Record comments on the newsprint.
3. Ask for examples of situations where a person needs to display each value. Participants may want to share times when they have had to make decisions using good judgment based on strong character.
4. As the discussion flows, write down definitions and notes under each heading that participants can refer to later. For each value, help youth identify reasons why a particular characteristic is important to them and to American democracy. (For example, it's important that people who vote be trustworthy, and it's also important for the people they vote for to be trustworthy to ensure a democracy that is just and fair.)
5. Divide participants into six teams. Assign a value to each (trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship). Explain that teams will be given a vignette (a short sketch) in which the characters have a moral problem to solve that is associated with the value they have been assigned. Teams discuss the problem and then perform two skits showing two possible solutions to the problem:
 - a. The first skit should show a solution in which the value isn't used (demonstrating an inappropriate way to approach the problem).
 - b. The second skit should show a solution to the problem using the value (demonstrating an ethical or more helpful way to address the problem).

To explain further, use this example: The trustworthiness team might be assigned a vignette with the following problem: *Ben has not been doing well in math. He needs to make a good grade to make the soccer team. John offers to do Ben's math homework if he will help him out with his newspaper route. What should Ben do?*

The team would make up two skits. The first would show what Ben should not do if he is a person who is trustworthy. The second would show what Ben should do if he is trustworthy.
6. Give one vignette from the handout to each team corresponding to the value they were assigned. Give teams time to discuss solutions to the problems and to create the skits. Let teams act out skits for the group.

ACTIVITY: Acting With Character

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- What did you like about this activity?
- What did you learn about character?
- How did your team work together to decide on both solutions to the problem?
- What did you do to plan the skits?

PROCESS

- Which problems came up when you were planning your skits?
- What did you learn about communicating with others?

GENERALIZE

- Why is it important to know about values?
- Why is it important to know how to make good decisions?

APPLY

- How can you use what you have learned about shared values in school? At home? In your community?
- Can you name other situations in which practicing these widely shared values of character would be important?
- Can you describe situations in which teachers, police officers, parents or other adults demonstrated trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Let participants guess which value is being acted out.
- Let participants make up their own problems to act them out using one of the shared values.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.E. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the importance of certain dispositions to themselves and American democracy.
- Standard V.C. (5-8): Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance of personal responsibilities to the individual and society.
- Standard V.D. (5-8): Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on the importance of certain dispositions or traits of character to themselves and American constitutional democracy.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Six sheets of newsprint with the headings: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship
- Markers
- Tape
- Photocopy of handout *Vignettes*

TIME

45 to 60 minutes

SETTING

Enough chairs for each participant and room to practice and act out skits



HANDOUT: Vignettes

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness means being honest, reliable, loyal and having integrity.

Trustworthiness

Kristin has promised her best friend, Sarah, that she would go to the movies with Sarah on her birthday. The next day Kristin receives a party invitation from Erin for the same day. Kristin really wants to go to Erin's party. She knows that if she goes to the party she could be part of the cool crowd. She knows that Sarah is not invited. What does Kristin do?

Trustworthiness

Lamont doesn't have enough money for the class field trip. He really wants to attend, but he can't if he doesn't have the money. He is too embarrassed to admit to the teacher that he can't afford to go. He sees some coins on the floor behind Nick's desk. No one else is around and he could take the money without anyone knowing. What does Lamont do?

Trustworthiness

Adam and Jason are playing a game. If Adam cheats, he can win. Jason won't know that he is cheating. Adam really wants to win. What does he do?

RESPECT

Respect means listening, being open and understanding of others, especially those different from us.

Respect

It's Elmira's first day at school. She has only been in the United States for a few days. She speaks very little English. Her clothes are different from those of the other students. Most of the children snicker when she is introduced to the class. Mrs. O'Brien asks Amy to be Elmira's mentor for the whole year, to eat lunch with her and help make her feel more welcome. Amy is afraid that she'll be teased by the others. She doesn't know how to communicate with Elmira. What does Amy do?

Respect

Tim accidentally trips in the cafeteria. His tray goes flying and his lunch ends up all over the face and lap of Michael. Michael becomes angry and threatens to hit Tim. What does Tim do?

Respect

Juanita's grandmother calls to wish her a happy birthday. Her grandmother can't hear well. Juanita has trouble communicating with her grandmother, and besides, she's busy talking to friends on the computer. Juanita would rather talk to her friends than her grandmother. What does Juanita do?

HANDOUT: Vignettes

RESPONSIBILITY

People who are responsible do what they say they will do, persevere, use self-control and are self-disciplined.

Responsibility

Celine and Michelle are skipping home from school. Michelle playfully pushes Celine, who drops her library book in a mud puddle. Celine knows she can't return the book to the library in this condition. What do the girls do?

Responsibility

Ethan has an important test tomorrow. He knows that he needs to study most of the night. Joshua calls and says he has a ticket to tonight's game. Ethan really wants to go, but he knows if he goes, he can't study. What does Ethan do?

Responsibility

Hannah and Alyssa are on the track team. The coach has the team members run outside every day. But today is very cold and both girls are tired. They don't really want to run today. They also know that being part of the team means to show up at all the practices. They both would rather stay home and watch TV. What do the girls do?

FAIRNESS

A person who is fair plays by the rules, takes turns and shares. A fair person works to get all the facts and doesn't falsely blame or accuse others.

Fairness

Hayden is president of his club. He needs to assign someone to be in charge of the honors committee. Matthew has been at every club meeting and works very hard. He deserves to be in charge of the committee. Daniel is Hayden's friend. He rarely shows up at the meetings and doesn't do the tasks he is assigned. Hayden would rather put Daniel in charge so that the two friends can spend more time together. What does Hayden do?

Fairness

José comes home from school and finds that his lamp is broken. He immediately assumes that his little brother, Marco, is responsible. What does José do?

Fairness

Dad asks Olga and Sasha to shovel the driveway. Olga goes out to shovel and Sasha says she'll be out as soon as she finishes her math homework. When Sasha comes out, she notices that Olga is still shoveling and that more than half of the driveway is shoveled. What does Sasha do?



HANDOUT: Vignettes

CARING

A person who is caring is kind and compassionate. A caring person helps people in need and is willing to forgive others.

Caring

Keisha receives a birthday gift from her aunt. When she opens it, she sees that it's a sweater that is not in style. In fact, Keisha thinks it's very ugly. What does she do?

Caring

Kyle's father is late getting to Kyle's baseball game. He doesn't see Kyle hit a homerun. Kyle is angry at his father, who seems to be always late for everything. After the game, his dad comes up to apologize. What does Kyle do?

Caring

Imelda sits crying in the cafeteria. Nina wants to sit with her friends but she knows that it would probably help Imelda if someone talked to her. What does Nina do?

CITIZENSHIP

A good citizen gets involved in community affairs, follows the law and works for a fair and just democracy.

Citizenship

Carlos and Jacob are riding their bikes through town. They see a sign that reads, "No bicycles on this street." If they go around to another street, they'll be late to practice. What do Carlos and Jacob do?

Citizenship

Jack used to take his sister, Leticia, to the park every Saturday. They stopped going because some people let their dogs off their leashes in the park and Leticia was afraid. Jack has no place to bring Leticia to play. What does Jack do?

Citizenship

Lorna and Danielle enjoy canoeing on the river. In the past few weeks, they have noticed a lot of trash in the river. Lorna is eating a snack in the canoe and she throws her candy wrapper in the river. What does Danielle do?



ACTIVITY: Shared Values and Symbols

(simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants explore shared values within the United States and identify symbols that represent those values. They then create their own symbols representing American values.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Understand the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values.
- Recognize U.S. symbols that reflect these values.
- Create their own symbols that represent American values.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking; responsible citizenship

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Character

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard II.A. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the importance of the fundamental values and principles of American democracy.
- Standard II.B. (K-4): Students should be able to identify some important beliefs commonly held by Americans about themselves and their government.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity direction and materials.
- Display enlarged symbols around the room.
- Make a poster using posterboard and markers listing American values: life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, courage, justice, equality of opportunity, diversity, truth and patriotism. Display this poster in the front of the room.

During the meeting

1. Introduce the topic by saying that, as Americans, we share fundamental values of American democracy. (Use the poster as a reference.) Explain that some of these principals — life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — are mentioned in the Declaration of Independence. Other values include courage, justice, equality of opportunity, diversity, truth and patriotism.
2. Ask the group the meaning of each value. Ask if there are other values that could be added to the list. Add these as they are mentioned and discussed.
3. Draw attention to the pictures of the U.S. symbols that are on display. Pass around the copies of the coins and dollar bills. Discuss which values are represented by the displayed symbols and those on the coins and bills. (Examples: The bald eagle that appears on the backs of some quarters symbolizes courage. The Statue of Liberty symbolizes liberty.) Initiate a discussion about which American values may not be portrayed in our country's symbols. Brainstorm ideas on how these values might be portrayed in symbols.
4. Ask the participants to design their own U.S. symbols using paper and markers. Let participants explain which values their symbols represent.



ACTIVITY: Shared Values and Symbols

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- What did you enjoy most about doing this activity?
- What was the easiest to do? What was the most difficult?
- How did you feel when you were creating your symbol?

PROCESS

- How did you decide which symbol you were going to make?
- How did you decide which values your symbol represents?

GENERALIZE

- What did you learn about U.S. symbols?
- What did you learn about American values?

APPLY

- How does the symbol that you created reflect American values?
- Can you think of any additional values that we all share which could be included in your symbol?
- Why is it important to show respect for symbols that reflect our values?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Work in teams to create the symbols.
- Use clay to make statues.
- Create a design for a new U.S. flag for a sewing project.
- Research each familiar U.S. symbol in the library and on the Internet to find out more about the history of the symbol.
- Play the national anthem or other patriotic songs such as *America the Beautiful* and discuss the lyrics. Youth could be encouraged to write their own songs that convey American values.
- Examine the two circulating U.S. coins that depict women—the Susan B. Anthony dollar (introduced in 1979) and the Sacagawea golden dollar (introduced in 2000). Discuss why so few women appear on U.S. currency. Let youth research the lives of these two women.

- Standard II.C. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, principles and beliefs.
- Standard II.C. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the importance of shared political values and principles to American society.
- Standard II. D. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the meaning and importance of the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Photocopies of coins and dollar bills
- Paper
- Posterboard
- Tape
- Markers
- Photocopy of handout *Symbols of the United States*, with symbols enlarged, if possible

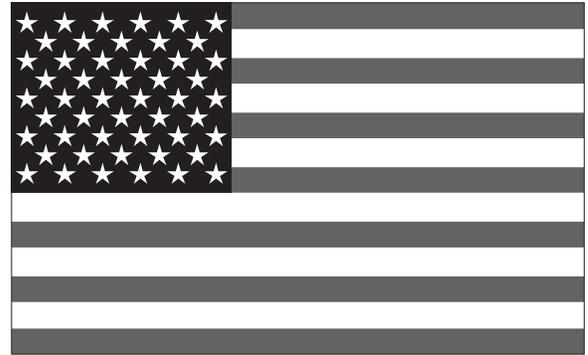
TIME

45 to 60 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs

HANDOUT: Symbols of the United States



ACTIVITY: The Great Seal of the United States

(Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants become familiar with the Great Seal of the United States and discuss its symbols. They identify values represented by the symbols on the Great Seal and design their own seal representing these values.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Understand the importance of sharing and supporting certain values.
- Recognize the Great Seal of the United States.
- Are able to identify the symbols on the seal and what they represent.
- Design and create their own seal.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking; responsible citizenship

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Character

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard II.A. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the importance of the fundamental values and principles of American democracy.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Become familiar with the Great Seal of the United States and what the symbols on it represent by reading through the activity or by doing further research at the library or on the Internet. (If your time is limited, focus only on the front side of the seal.)

During the meeting

1. Distribute *The Great Seal* handout to each participant.
2. Explain to participants the history of the Great Seal and its importance in representing our nation's values. Point out each symbol on the seal while talking about its significance.
 - a. Explain that the Great Seal is used to seal important government documents after they are signed by the President. It's also found on the envelopes of some important government letters. The design of the front of the seal is the coat of arms of the United States. It appears on coins, stamps, stationery, publications, flags, military uniforms, public monuments, public buildings, passports and other items of the U.S. Government (U.S. Department of State 2003). Explain that anyone who has a dollar bill has the Great Seal, because it appears on the back of a dollar.
 - b. On July 4, 1776, three of the five men who created the Declaration of Independence—Benjamin Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson—were assigned the task of creating a seal for the United States of America. Six years later, in 1782, the task was finally finished. It took three committees and 14 men to do it! Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, selected the best features of all designs submitted. William Barton, who had an active part in the third committee's design, refined them.

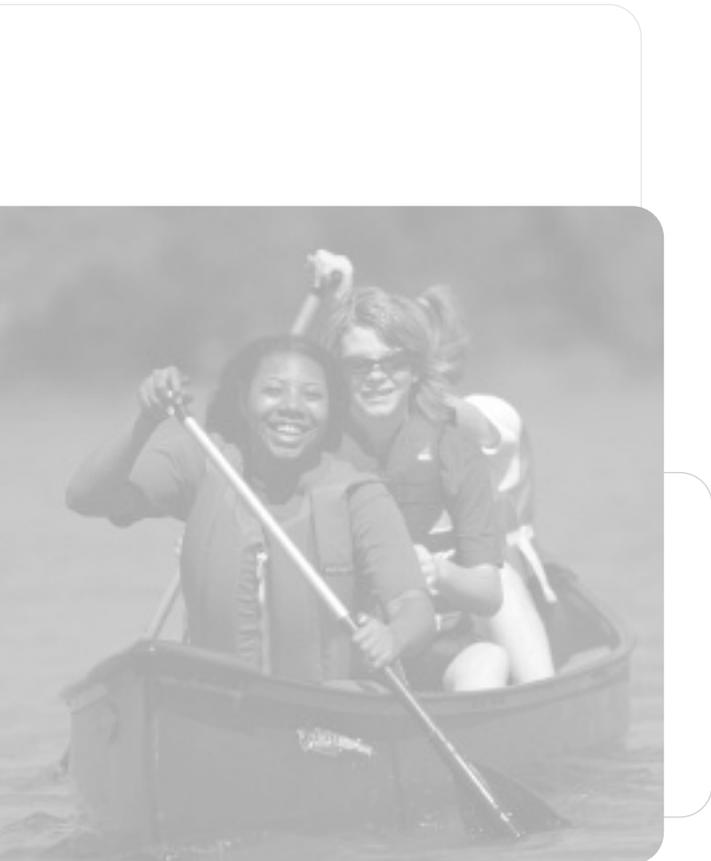
ACTIVITY: The Great Seal of the United States



- c. The seal reflects the beliefs and values of our country. When Charles Thomson presented the final report on the seal to Congress, he explained the symbols on the front side in this way:
- The shield (escutcheon) and the eagle— “The Escutcheon is born on the breast of an American Eagle without any supporters [figures represented as holding up the shield] to denote that the United States of America ought to rely on their own Virtue” (U.S. Department of State 2003, 5).
 - Red and white stripes of the shield — “represent the several states... supporting a [blue] Chief which unites the whole and represents Congress.” The colors come from our American flag. “White signifies purity and innocence, Red, hardiness & valour, and Blue, the colour of the Chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance & justice” (U.S. Department of State 2003, 5).
 - Number 13 — The 13 arrows, 13 stripes of the shield and 13 stars in the constellation represent the 13 original states.
 - The olive branch and the arrows — These “denote the power of peace & war.” (U.S. Department of State 2003, 5).
 - Constellation of stars — The constellation of stars represents a new country being formed amidst other nations.
 - The motto (*E Pluribus Unum*) — Although it was not translated in Thomson’s report, *e pluribus unum* means “Out of Many, One.” This refers to the union of the 13 states into one country.

ACTIVITY: The Great Seal of the United States

3. If there is time, discuss the reverse side of the seal. This side is sometimes referred to as the spiritual side of the seal.
 - a. Pyramid — The pyramid has 13 steps with the year 1776 in Roman numerals on the base. Thomson said that the pyramid signified strength and duration (U.S. Department of State 2003, 5).
 - b. Eye of Providence — This eye appears at the top of the pyramid in a triangle surrounded by a Glory (rays of light). Above that is the motto, *Annuit Coeptis*, “He has favored our undertakings.” In Thomson’s report to Congress he says, “The Eye over it & the Motto allude to the many signal interpositions of providence in favour of the American cause.” (U.S. Department of State 2003, 5).
 - c. *Novus Ordo Seclorum* “A new order of the ages” — This motto signifies the beginning of the New American Era (U.S. Department of State 2003, 6).
4. Another approach to discussing the seal would be to ask participants what they think each symbol represents before they are given this information. You may also want to discuss why a particular symbol may have been chosen for the seal. For example, an eagle is an independent bird and thus, it would symbolize freedom.
5. Discuss the meanings of words such as strength, duration, providence, virtue, purity, innocence, hardiness, valour (valor), vigilance, perseverance and justice. Explain that these are fundamental values of our democracy. It may be helpful to have a dictionary handy. Ask: “Why is it important to have shared values? Which other values can you think of that have not been mentioned?”
6. Ask the youth to pretend that the President of the United States called and asked them to design a new seal for our country. (Participants may want to work independently or on small teams.) Ask them to think of symbols that they would want to include on their new seals. They should be ready to explain which value each symbol represents. They can begin by sketching designs and ideas on scrap paper. When they have a design that they are happy with, they may reproduce it onto the paper plates or cardboard backings. Designs can be colored with crayons or markers, or they can be painted.
7. When designs are complete, let each participant share their seal with the rest of the group. If a team designed a seal together, let each member contribute to the presentation.



ACTIVITY: The Great Seal of the United States

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- What did you enjoy doing the most in this activity?
- What was the easiest to do? What was the most difficult?
- How did you feel when you were creating your own seal?

PROCESS

- Why do you think it took so long (six years) to come up with a design for the Great Seal?
- Do you think there were disagreements about what would go on the seal? If so, how do you think they were resolved?
- Which problems came up when you were designing your own seal?

GENERALIZE

- What did you learn about the symbols on the Great Seal?
- How does your seal reflect American values?
- Were any values not included in our seals that we might want to include?

APPLY

- Why is it important to have something such as a seal that represents the values of our country?
- Why is it important that the people of the United States have shared values and principles?
- How can you reflect our country's values in your everyday life?

TRY THIS, TOO

- An older group of young people might want to pool their ideas and make one large seal. This would require quite a bit of compromising.
- Let youth do further research at the library or on the Internet to find out more about:
 - The key players in designing the Great Seal: Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Thomson and William Barton.
 - The history of the designing of the Great Seal.
 - Other symbols of our country: the Statue of Liberty, the bald eagle, Uncle Sam, the Statue of Justice and the flag.
- Let youth make simplified shape versions of their seals out of cardboard, sponges or craft foam. Paint the seals and use them to stamp letters and envelopes. Participants can pretend that they are sealing important government documents!
- Encourage participants to make up a new motto for our country. Can they translate their mottos into Latin?

- Standard II.B. (K-4): Students should be able to identify some important beliefs commonly held by Americans about themselves and their government.
- Standard II.C. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, principles and beliefs.
- Standard II.C. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the importance of shared political values and principles to American society.
- Standard II.D. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the meaning and importance of the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Plain white paper plates or cardboard backings for pizzas
- Scrap paper
- Pencils
- Crayons, markers, paints and paintbrushes (optional)
- Photocopy of handout *The Great Seal* for each participant

TIME

45 to 60 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs

HANDOUT: The Great Seal



FRONT



BACK

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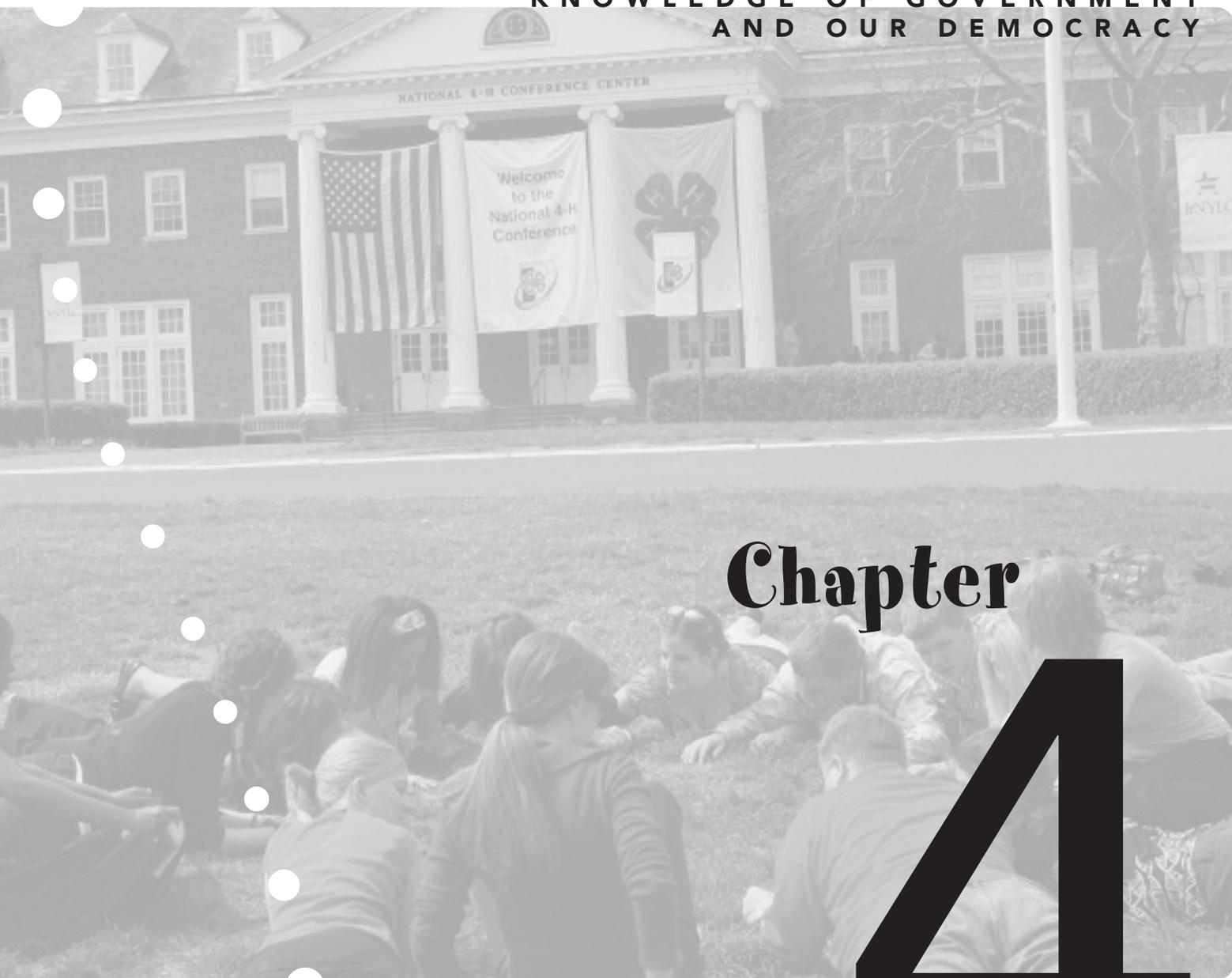
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KNOWLEDGE OF GOVERNMENT
AND OUR DEMOCRACY



Chapter

4

Knowledge of ‘Government and Our Democracy

“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of a democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.” — Franklin D. Roosevelt

Instruction in U.S. government and democracy—at the national, state and local levels—is an important part of increasing civic knowledge. American citizens should have an understanding of our government’s structure, the powers and responsibilities of its different branches and levels, and how it influences and is influenced by the greater society. Knowledge of government helps us be politically engaged. The more knowledgeable we are, the more likely we are to understand important political issues. We become smarter voters.

Learning about government is usually confined to the classroom. However, extracurricular programs can enrich this learning and bring government to life by helping young people explore democratic processes, procedures and issues through experiential activities.

Young people often see government as boring, distant and unrelated to themselves. A vital part of civic education is to demystify government—to show that the government is made up of real people, and the average American citizen is intimately involved in how governmental officials are chosen and how decisions are made. Exposing youth to the human side of politics—talking with elected officials, visiting government buildings, attending meetings—is a great way to make government more personal. Understanding government structure and processes allows youth to see how the system works and how they can make a difference.



ACTIVITY: Government Is Us (Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants learn about representative government by writing rules for their after-school club. They create rules individually, then choose representatives who have the power to decide what the rules for the group will be. Participants must communicate to their representatives which rules they support or oppose.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Explain the purposes of rules and laws.
- Experience representative government.
- Brainstorm ways to use their voice in decision making.
- Define active citizenship.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Self-responsibility; decision making

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Knowledge of government

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard I.E. (K-4): Students should be able to explain the purposes of rules and laws and why they are important in their classroom, school, community, state, and nation.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Make photocopies of the *Group Rules* handouts to distribute to all participants.
- Make sure that all participants have a writing utensil.
- Bring newsprint and markers (easel optional).

During the meeting

1. Begin with a discussion about the importance of rules in the classroom and at home. Let participants give examples of some of the rules their teachers or parents have established (e.g., raise your hand before you speak, no television until homework is completed). Next talk about rules or laws in your city, state and country. Discuss what would happen if there were no laws. Explain that in the United States we elect—vote for—people who choose the laws. They are our representatives.
2. Explain the purpose of this activity: To set rules for the after-school group that everyone will follow for the remainder of the meetings. Give each participant a *Group Rules* handout and a pencil. Ask them to individually write rules that would help the club be a fun and safe place.
3. After everyone has completed the handout, explain that participants will elect a representative for the club. (Each person can write the name of the representative of their choice; you can collect and tally the results.) After the representative is chosen, explain that he or she is the only one who actually has the power to decide what the rules will be. Let the elected representative read the list of rules that he or she wrote.
4. Ask: Does this mean that we should just let the representative use their own rules as the rules of the club? How can we let our representative know what we want the rules to be? Discuss what the members must tell the representative about their rule preferences.
5. Ask participants to read their rules and record them on newsprint (don't repeat rules). Once everyone has shared, let participants vote on each rule (it may be helpful to have participants keep their heads down during the votes). Have the elected representative record the rules that receive a majority vote. Explain that these are the official group rules. Post them in the room.
6. Explain that in our democracy, we elect representatives who have the power to make laws. (At the national level, we have the U.S. Congress, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. At the state level, we also have a House of Representatives and Senate. At the local level, we have county boards of commissioners, city councils and school boards.) We as a people have a responsibility to let our representatives know what we want. Otherwise, these representatives could decide that their rules were going to be everyone's rules.
7. Explain that we have the responsibility to be active citizens. We can do this by voting (when we're adults) and writing letters to our representatives. The government is us!

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- What did you enjoy about this activity?
- What did you not like about this activity?
- How did you feel when I said that the representative had the power to decide which rules would be followed?
- How did you feel when we voted on the rules?

PROCESS

- Which problems came up when you were trying to think of rules?
- Do you think that it was a good idea to vote on each rule?
- What is the job of the representative?
- How did each of you play an active part in this process?

GENERALIZE

- What happens when a representative of our state or country doesn't listen to what the people want?
- How can people let their representatives know what they are thinking about an issue? (Letter writing, petitions, meetings with representatives, protests and other means.)
- What is active citizenship?

APPLY

- How can you make your voice heard in our government today?
- How can we be active citizens in other areas of our lives (in school and in our community)?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Any decision-making activity done with the group cooperating together could be substituted for generating group rules. For example, the activity could be planning a (real or imaginary) field trip or designing a T-shirt.
- Let club members find out who represents them on both the state and national levels.
- Identify an issue that club members would want to write to their representatives about. Let participants write, call or e-mail their representatives on this issue.



- Standard V.F. (K-4): Students should be able to describe the means by which citizens can influence the decisions and actions of their government.
- Standard II.A. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the essential ideas of American constitutional government.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Several sheets of newsprint
- Markers
- Pencils
- Tape
- Photocopy of handout *Group Rules* for each participant

TIME

30 to 60 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs to accommodate all participants

HANDOUT: Group Rules

List the rules that you would like to have for this group (for example, "no put-downs").

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

ACTIVITY: So You Want To Be A U.S. Citizen? (Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants experience what people do to become citizens by taking a sample U.S. Citizenship Test and reciting the *Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens*. It's recommended that the activity, "A Good Citizen is . . ." be completed first.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Review the meaning of citizenship as discussed in the activity, "A Good Citizen is. . ."
- Examine what individuals who want to become U.S. citizens need to know.
- Compare what participants think is good citizenship to what individuals are asked to know when they take the test to become a U.S. citizen.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking; communication

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Knowledge of government

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.B. (K-4) and Standard V.A. (5-8): Students should be able to explain how one becomes a citizen of the United States.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.

During the meeting

1. Review with participants the meaning of being a good citizen from the activity, "A Good Citizen is. . ."
2. Explain that to become a U.S. citizen, you must either be born into it (have an American parent) or become naturalized. To become naturalized, you must pass a U.S. citizenship test to determine whether or not you have the knowledge necessary to become an American. Additionally, to become a U.S. citizen, a person must:
 - Live in the United States for an extended period.
 - Be able to read, write and speak English.
 - Know and understand U.S. history and government.
 - Be of good moral character.
 - Have an attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution.
 - Have a favorable attitude toward the United States.
3. Explain that participants are going to take a sample U.S. Citizenship Test. Emphasize that these are sample questions from the test that people who want to be citizens must take. Hand out copies of the sample test (or other test you've prepared). Give participants time to take the test. Afterward, read the answers aloud (see *Answer Sheet*). Participants can decide whether or not they want to share how many answers they got correct!
4. Explain that to become a U.S. citizen, you must answer six out of ten questions correctly. Give participants a moment to consider this, and then ask:
 - Do these questions determine whether or not you are a good citizen?
 - If you answered all of the questions correctly, does that make you a good citizen?
 - If you answered some questions incorrectly, does that mean that you're not a good citizen?
 - How does this compare with what we said makes a good citizen?
 - What else needs to be asked to determine whether or not someone will be a good citizen?
5. Distribute the *Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens* handout. Explain that every naturalized citizen must take this oath. Read the oath and let participants repeat after you to simulate the experience of taking the oath, if they wish. Review the oath with the participants and identify each of the responsibilities indicated for citizenship. Explain and discuss the meaning of each responsibility.
 - a. Renunciation of foreign allegiance. People must decide that they will no longer be loyal to their former country and must switch their loyalty to the United States.
 - b. Support and defense of the Constitution and laws. People must be willing to support and defend our Constitution and laws.

Use the handout *U.S. Citizenship Sample Test* or visit the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services web site at <http://www.uscis.gov/natzpilot> to create your own list of 10 questions. Photocopy this new test and use instead of the handout.

ACTIVITY: So You Want To Be A U.S. Citizen?

- c. Allegiance to the Constitution and laws. People must be willing to be loyal to our Constitution and laws.
- d. Service in armed forces when required by law. People must be willing to serve our country if the law requires it.

Discuss what participants think about these requirements. How do they think it feels to agree to some of them? Why do they think they are important? Ask participants to consider everything that has been discussed to this point. Ask the question again, “What is citizenship?”

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Which part of this activity did you enjoy doing?
- What did you like least about this activity?
- What are some reasons someone would want to become a citizen of the United States?

PROCESS

- What did you learn from doing this activity?
- What did you learn about what is required to be a naturalized citizen of the United States?
- What are the similarities and differences between the test to become a good citizen and what we said is a definition of being a good citizen?
- Are there additional ways to find out if someone would be a good citizen? Why do you think citizenship is based on a test and time lived in the United States?

GENERALIZE

- Why is it important to understand how someone becomes a citizen and what it means to be a good citizen?

APPLY

- Is our definition of citizenship inclusive of all groups? Are there people who are left out of our definition based on race, gender, ethnicity or class?
- A common stereotype is that people of color, including Latinos, Asian Americans, Arab Americans and others are “from somewhere else” and are not “real” citizens. People of color often get asked, “Where are you from?” even when they and their families may have lived in the United States for years—and even generations. What do you think about this statement? How can we ensure that we are inclusive of all groups? Are there times in the past where other people may have been stereotyped when they came to the United States?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Invite speakers to the meeting who have become naturalized citizens. Ask them to talk about what becoming an American citizen means to them. There may be parents of participants in the club who have taken the citizenship test or are in the process of learning about being a citizen. Ask them to talk about similarities and differences to their country of origin, including government and individual participation in government.
- Organize a good citizenship project for the community.
- Have the participants rewrite the *Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens*, putting it in their own words.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- Photocopy of handout *U.S. Citizenship Sample Test* for each participant (or see textbox on preceding page)
- Photocopy of handout *Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens* for each participant

TIME

45 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs arranged in a circle or semi-circle

HANDOUT: U.S. Citizenship Sample Test

1. What is the supreme law of the land?

2. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?

3. What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?

4. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?

5. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?

6. Who is called the "Father of Our Country"?

7. Who is the President now?

8. Who is the governor of your state?

9. Why does the flag have 13 stripes?

10. What ocean is on the west coast of the United States?

HANDOUT: U.S. Citizenship Sample Test Answer Sheet*

1. What is the supreme law of the land?

Constitution

2. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?

Bill of Rights

3. What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?

Senate and the House of Representatives

4. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?

July 4, 1776

5. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?

Africans (people from Africa)

6. Who is called the "Father of Our Country"?

George Washington

7. Who is the President now?

(Name of the current president)

8. Who is the governor of your state?

(Name of the current governor)

9. Why does the flag have 13 stripes?

Because there were 13 original colonies

10. What ocean is on the west coast of the United States?

Pacific Ocean

*Obtained as public domain from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (July 2007). The questions and answers for the test were selected randomly from the official list of 142 *Questions and Answers for New Pilot Naturalization Test* from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For a full list of questions, visit the USCIS web site at <http://www.uscis.gov/natzpilot>. When giving the test to persons desiring citizenship, the examiner selects any ten questions at their discretion to be posed orally to the examinees. According to the USCIS, most regional offices require a score of 6 out of 10 to pass.

Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens*

The **U.S. Oath of Allegiance for Naturalized Citizens** must be taken by all immigrants whom wish to become U.S. citizens.

The current oath is as follows:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

*Obtained as public domain from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (July 2007).

ACTIVITY: Citizenship Bowl (Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants who were introduced to the sample questions of the U.S. Citizenship Test now take part in a contest to answer the questions on the same test. Do this activity after “A Good Citizen is . . .” and “So You Want to be a United States Citizen.”

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Discuss the meaning of citizenship.
- Examine different definitions of citizenship.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Critical thinking; communication

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Knowledge of government

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.A. (K-4) and Standard V.A. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- Standard V.B. (K-4) and Standard V.A. (5-8): Students should be able to explain how one becomes a citizen of the United States.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Download and create flashcards by printing them off on heavy stock and cutting them into cards (at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/M-623.pdf>). Or, let participants make flashcards of all of the questions for the Citizenship Test (from <http://www.uscis.gov/natzpilot>).
- Give participants extra time to practice for the Citizenship Bowl.
- Make signs for the tables for the bowl labeled *Team 1* and *Team 2*.

During the meeting

1. Review the word *citizenship* with participants, encouraging them to define and give examples.
2. Review the steps to become a U.S. citizen: You must either be born into it (have an American parent) or become naturalized. To become naturalized, you must pass a U.S. Citizenship Test to determine whether or not you have the knowledge necessary to become an American citizen. Other requirements include:
 - Live in the United States for an extended period.
 - Be able to read, write and speak English.
 - Know and understand U.S. history and government.
 - Be of good moral character.
 - Have an attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution.
 - Have a favorable attitude toward the United States.
3. Mention that one of the marks of a good U.S. citizen is to be knowledgeable about our government and our government history. Explain that participants will attempt to learn the answers to the sample questions on the U.S. Citizenship Test and then take part in a Citizenship Bowl.

ACTIVITY: Citizenship Bowl



4. Have participants pair up. Divide up the USCIS Civics Flash Cards and distribute to teams. Team members can practice asking each other the questions using the flashcards. When the participants are done studying the flashcards, have all the teams exchange flashcards. Continue this procedure on a rotating basis until all participants have practiced all of the cards.
5. When teams are ready, start the Citizenship Bowl. There are two ways (at least) to do this. Initiate one bowl game with eight participants, while the rest of the participants act as the audience. Divide players into two teams of four (Team 1 and Team 2). Arrange two tables in front of the group parallel to each other, and give each team member a bell. The facilitator will read a question. The first person to ring the bell will get a chance to answer the question as soon as the facilitator recognizes him or her. If the person answers correctly, their team gains a point. If the person answers incorrectly, the other team may answer the question. Continue the game until a predetermined score or time is reached.
6. Another bowl option is to have several bowls going at once. This will allow for maximum participation. Participants can be assigned to be scorekeepers and moderators for each bowl. Divide up flashcards and hand them out to youth moderators. Institute a time limit so that everyone is done at once. The teams who scored the highest on each bowl are the winners.
7. Celebrate with prizes for everyone, if you wish.

ACTIVITY: Citizenship Bowl

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- How did it feel to be part of the bowl?
- Did you enjoy the part that you had in the bowl?
- Was there anything that you did not like about the bowl?

PROCESS

- Which problems came up during the bowl?
- How did you deal with these problems?
- Why is it important to know what it takes to be a good citizen?

GENERALIZE

- What did you learn from being in the Citizenship Bowl?
- Have you had any similar experiences?
- Do you think the questions on the citizenship test are hard or easy?
- Do you think that it's necessary to know all of the answers to be a good citizen?
- Do you think that some of the questions are more important than others?

APPLY

- How can you practice being a good citizen in your home, school, community or here in the after-school club?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Invite speakers to the meeting who have become naturalized citizens. Ask them to talk about what

becoming an American citizen means to them. There may be parents of participants in the club who have taken the citizenship test or are in the process of learning about being a citizen. Ask them to talk about similarities and differences to their country of origin, including government and individual participation in government.

- Invite parents, guardians or other family member to be the audience for the Citizenship Bowl.
- Redesign the Citizenship Bowl so participants can rotate on and off the team, or use other innovations to involve all after-school members and encourage participation.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Civics Flash Cards
- Heavy stock paper
- Scissors
- 8 or more desk bells
- Tables and chairs
- Paper for signs
- Tape
- Markers
- Prizes or awards (optional)

TIME

Practice for the Citizenship Bowl can take place at several after-school sessions depending on the amount of participants and extent of their knowledge. The Citizenship Bowl itself will take about 30 minutes.

SETTING

Tables and chairs arranged depending on which type of Citizenship Bowl you choose (see Steps 5 and 6 in "During the meeting")



Chapter References



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COMMUNITY-BASED
SERVICE LEARNING



Chapter

5

Community-Based Service Learning

“Cleaning up a river bank is service. Reading a book about environmental conservation is learning. Youth reviewing results from water studies, presenting the scientific information to a pollution control agency and discussing the impact these results may have on future pollution control issues and our own behaviors is community-based service learning”.

— Angelia Salas, November 2006, 4-H Teen Peer Mentoring and Service Learning Subgrantee Orientation and Training

SERVICE LEARNING

Another term used in the academic and youth development field is service learning. Service learning takes a more academic approach to community service. It links classroom academics to related community service. Billig and Furco (2002) describe service learning as a method of teaching and learning that involves having classroom students perform community service to achieve academic goals. Overall, the literature (Knox, Wangaard and Michaelson 2003) describes four steps to a service-learning project: Preparation or researching and finding a community need; action or carrying out the project; reflection through journal writing, reading and discussion with others; and celebration through certificates, parties, assemblies and thank-you cards.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community service, a well-known term in community programming, has its own definition. It has been defined as the voluntary action of an individual or group of individuals without pay. Examples of this type of service are food drives, adopt-a-highway programs, tutoring, teaching younger children or raking yards for elderly neighbors. It is action in the community, involving community members—youth, adults and families—coming together to work on a common interest or community need. The term community service has different meanings in many different situations. Some may consider it service without pay, however, in most communities, youth and adults are required to do community service through the court system for various offenses. This has led some young people to wonder if they want to be identified with community-service activities.



Community-Based Service Learning

"62% of teens surveyed, say that the issues that really matter to them are the ones that have personally touched them or someone they know." — MTV 2006



KEY COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE LEARNING

Combining the definition of community service and service learning and putting it in the context of a community is what community-based service learning is all about. Definitions for community-based service learning are emerging; however, they all seem to have several key components. The Michigan Community Service Commission states that community-based service learning is composed of activities that meet genuine community needs and that require the application of knowledge, skills and reflection time.

To be effective, it's important that youth are actively involved in the process. They can be engaged with assessing community needs, designing projects to address community needs and reflecting before, during and after the service experience. In addition, service activities are designed to meet learning objectives, not just to do service. When activities are designed to meet specific objectives, youth gain skills and knowledge including:

- An understanding of the value of helping others.
- Life skills.
- Reinforcement of what is learned in the classroom.
- Teamwork, cooperation and diversity skills.
- Self-esteem from positive results of their service.
- A sense of citizenship.
- Experiences in the work world.

Gender Issues

When thinking about organizing community-based service-learning activities, consider the role of gender. “Girls may prefer planning and implementing as a group since leadership for girls may involve less hierarchical, more collaborative decision making” (Lyons et al. 1990 as cited in Denner and Griffin, 135). “Many girls see themselves as change agents, concerned with making the world a better place for themselves and their families,” so they may be eager to get involved with service activities (Denner and Dunbar 2002; McKay 1998; Ms. Foundation 2000; all as cited in Denner and Griffin, 135) and “doing service for others may increase the struggle of some adolescent girls to care for others and also care for themselves” (Gilligan 1990, as cited in Denner and Griffin, 135-136).

Boys seem to have other needs. In a study, boys who participated in service learning exhibited positive changes in self-esteem. (Switzer et al. 1995, as cited in Denner and Griffin). Boys will become more engaged in community service activities when the project uses their talents or interests (Denner and Griffin), which may mean that it’s especially important to involve them in the decision-making process. Some community-based service-learning activities may provide boys with the opportunity to experience being relational caregivers (Denner and Griffin), which they may not have an opportunity to do in their everyday lives.



Five-Step Community-Based Service-Learning Model

“Young people need to be partners in every step of the model to ensure youth voice.” — Cyndi Mark, Program Leader, Michigan 4-H Youth Development

Various models could be used to help explain the steps for a community-based service-learning project. Michigan 4-H Youth Development uses a five-step approach adapted from one developed by Allan Smith, program leader, CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service), USDA. This model places a greater emphasis on the reflection component of the steps to community-based service learning than some do.



Five-Step Community-Based Service-Learning Model*

Step 1. Assessing Needs: Gathering information to assess or determine if the project is needed.

Step 2. Planning and Preparing: Using the information gathered to plan the tasks, responsibilities, due dates and other nuts-and-bolts types of components in a community-based service-learning project. Involve the participants carrying out the service in the design of the intentional learning objectives.

Step 3. Experiencing Meaningful Service: Moving into action to carry out the projects

Step 4. Reflection: Taking what was learned about the process of carrying out the project either as an individual or a group and reflecting on what was learned in the experience. There are many ways to do this step, including group discussion, journals and web pages. Think of ideas for building this in before, during and at the end of the project. Reflection can be broken down more specifically to include:

- **Sharing:** Discussing what happened. Sharing what actually happened during the event with positive interaction and learning from group members.
- **Processing:** Thinking about and sharing what was learned and what was important, including which problems or issues occurred, similar experiences of the group members and how participants felt about the experience.

- **Generalizing:** Doing more in-depth reflection and having group members think about which life skills they learned during the experience.
- **Applying:** Applying what was learned to other experiences. Young people think about how they can use the life skills and knowledge they have learned in other situations in their lives with their peers, their families and in their community. For example, in most group service projects, young people learn to work as team members. This life skill can be used in the classroom or on a job. However, to understand this they need to reflect on their learning.

Step 5. Celebration: Taking time to celebrate the completed service project.



*For more information on how the model is used with a volunteer program, read the Volunteers' Guide in *Yea! Youth experiencing action: A community service learning guide* and visit the "4-H Citizenship, Leadership and Service" section of the Michigan 4-H Youth Development web site at <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/cyf/youth/differen.html>.

ACTIVITY: Instant Service Project (Simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants learn about community service learning by organizing “community” service projects that can be done on the spot.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Identify community needs in their immediate environments.
- Work with peers to plan and execute a service project.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Planning/organizing; service learning

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Community-based service learning

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.D. (K-4): Students should be able to explain why certain responsibilities are important to themselves and their family, community, state, and nation.
- Standard V.E. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the relationship between participating in civic and political life and the attainment of individual and public goals.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Decide if helpers are needed and how they will be utilized.
- Write the following questions on a sheet of newsprint:
 - What is the problem or issue that you are working on?
 - What are the goals of your project?
 - Which resources do you need to complete your project?
 - What is the best solution to the problem or issue, and which steps will you take to achieve this solution?

During the meeting

1. Divide participants into teams of two or three. Instruct each team to walk around the meeting place and observe details. Explain that each team will discuss what they think could be improved in the facility. Then teams do a project on the spot based on the change they would like to see. If teams have difficulty generating ideas, give suggestions: straightening bookshelves, cleaning chalkboards, decorating the walls or writing the 4-H pledge for everyone to see. Don't encourage teams to discuss their projects with one another before starting.
2. Before they begin their projects, display the newsprint with the four questions regarding project planning. Let each team either write their responses to these questions on newsprint or simply discuss these questions with their teammate(s).
3. Let the teams perform their projects. Some teams may begin work that conflicts with what others are doing. This should illuminate the importance of planning and knowing ahead of time what others are trying to accomplish. If problems arise, let participants try to resolve them on their own. All teams must complete their projects; this should encourage cooperation and negotiation skills.

ACTIVITY: Instant Service Project

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Ask the teams to share their projects and their results with the group.

PROCESS

- How did your team decide which project to do?
- Which roles did each team member play?
- How did the other teams' plans affect yours?
- What did you do if their goals conflicted with yours?

GENERALIZE

- Explain that their projects were examples of community service-learning projects. Ask: Why is it important to have a plan before doing a community service-learning project?
- Why is the word *learning* included in the term community service learning?
- What did you learn from performing your project?

APPLY

- Which kind of service-learning projects could you do in your community?

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Newsprint
- Markers
- Depending on ideas for service projects, some additional materials may be needed (e.g., markers and posterboard, if a team chooses to decorate the room)

TIME

45 minutes

SETTING

Indoors at regular meeting site



ACTIVITY: Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map (Simple)

DESCRIPTION

In this two-part activity, participants draw a map of their neighborhood and talk about its strengths and weaknesses to identify community issues. They brainstorm community service-learning project ideas and put together a plan of action to address a selected issue.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Draw maps of their neighborhoods, including important buildings and institutions.
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement in their communities.
- Brainstorm and plan a community service-learning project.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Service learning; problem solving

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Community service learning; issues

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.D. (K-4): Students should be able to explain why certain responsibilities are important to themselves and their family, community, state, and nation.
- Standard V.E. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the relationship between participating in civic and political life and the attainment of individual and public goals.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.

PART I

During the meeting

1. Divide participants into teams of three or four. (When working with a group from a broad geographic area, divide teams by those who live in the same general neighborhoods.) Give each team a sheet of posterboard, markers and craft materials. Ask teams to draw maps of their neighborhoods on posterboard, big enough to include important places (e.g., their homes, schools, parks, police stations, fire stations, banks and grocery stores). Allow 20 to 30 minutes for drawing and decoration.
2. Next, ask teams to write or draw onto their maps two things that they do in their neighborhoods which make them feel good. Then ask them to draw, write or circle two things that they like about their neighborhoods. Finally, have them draw, write or circle two things that they would change in their neighborhoods. Participants can do this in teams, by consensus or as individuals.



ACTIVITY: Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Ask the teams to share their maps with the whole group. Have them explain their maps and the additional things they drew or circled (see Step 2).

PROCESS

- What were the first things you drew on your maps?
- Which places did other people in your team draw that you wouldn't have drawn?
- Was it easier to come up with things you like about your neighborhood or things that you would like to change?

GENERALIZE

- Are there similarities between the teams regarding things that you like about your neighborhoods and things you want to change?
- Ask more broadly: What are the good things about your neighborhood?
- What are the things you would like to change?

APPLY

- Who is responsible for changing things in your neighborhoods?
- How can you change things in your neighborhood?
- Share information with the group about how the particular issues that they identify can be addressed by individuals, groups or organizations and public policy makers.



ACTIVITY: Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map

PART II

During the meeting

1. Ask the group to focus on the things about their communities that they would like to change from Part I. Let everyone repeat the things that they would like to change and record all responses on a sheet of newsprint. Give the group a chance to discuss or clarify any of the issues they list.
2. Next, give each person two stickers. Ask participants to place their stickers next to the two problems they would most like to work on with the group. The issue that has the most stickers next to it will be the one that the group focuses on.
3. Explain that now that the group has identified a community problem, they need to think of ways to address this problem. Give participants 2 to 3 *idea bubbles* each. Ask them to draw pictures of ideas that would make the selected problem better. Give participants time to draw scenarios that depict actions that address the problem. These pictures represent potential community service-learning projects.



ACTIVITY: Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Ask each participant to share their *idea bubbles* with the group and explain their drawings.

PROCESS

- What do you think about the ideas we came up with? (Be respectful of individuals when discussing ideas.)
- How did you decide which actions might make the chosen issue better?
- How can we decide which activity to do as a group to address this issue?

GENERALIZE

- Are there differences between working alone and working with a group?
- What is good and bad about both?

APPLY

- Have the group select a community service-learning project based on one or more of the ideas generated by participants. (Either repeat the sticker exercise from Part II or vote by a show of hands or secret ballot.) Ask which resources the group needs to work on this project and what they are going to do—exactly. Give each participant a *Plan of Action* handout and use it to guide the discussion. Take time to go through each of the items on this handout, record participant responses on newsprint and either have the group copy the responses on their handouts or post the newsprint and make copies of a completed *Plan of Action* handout for the next meeting.

TRY THIS, TOO

- After planning the community service-learning project, let the group take action to carry it out! Afterward, have the group evaluate what they have done and think about ways that they could improve their work in the future.
- Use the identified community issue as the topic for a project in which participants can research information in the library or online, interview community members or watch relevant movies or documentaries. Participants can take notes and report what they have learned at the next meeting prior to choosing a service-learning project.
- Take a walk around the immediate neighborhood before starting this activity. Ask the group to observe things they like about the neighborhood and things they would change if they could.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Several large pieces of poster-board
- Idea bubbles—construction paper cut into large cloud shapes (2 to 3 for each participant)
- Scissors
- Markers
- Other craft materials, such as stickers, glitter, cotton balls
- Newsprint
- Tape
- Inspirational stickers (2 for each participant)
- Photocopy of handout *Plan of Action* for each participant

TIME

90 minutes, divided into two parts

SETTING

Tables or a hard surface on which each of the teams can draw

HANDOUT: Plan of Action

Project name: _____

Description: _____

Our goal for the community: _____

Our goal for our own learning: _____

Number of youth to be involved: _____

Knowledge and skills needed: _____

Resources needed: _____

Who does what? _____

When? _____

Who supervises? _____

How we know our project is a success: _____

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PUBLIC POLICY AND
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Chapter

6

Public Policy and Civic Engagement

“Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I, and Congress, and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves.” — Thomas Jefferson

While the rate at which youth are participating in community service is high, youth interest in politics is at an all-time low. This appears to be a contradiction: How can young people be interested in fixing problems in their community without a care for how these problems are being addressed by people in positions of power? A possible explanation is that youth don't understand the public policy process or how to influence it.

Public-policy making is a combination of decisions, commitments and actions made by those who are in positions of power or who affect government decisions. Policies generally take the form of laws or ordinances, plans or courses of action. Some examples of public policies are the adoption of a vision for the community, a comprehensive plan, a budget or a policy relating to a specific issue, such as allowing or prohibiting skateboarding in a public area.

Almost every issue in our community is affected in some way by public policy. If the sidewalks in a neighborhood are in disrepair, the city government could make a policy to fix them. If a school doesn't have enough textbooks, the school board could make a policy to buy more. If someone wanted to take a dog for a walk in a local park, there may be

policy that prohibits pets in that area. Understanding who makes these policies requires a basic knowledge of government; understanding how to influence them requires skills in policy making.

Policy making can sound like a complicated and overwhelming prospect. But influencing public policy can be as simple as telling the school principal that there should be ten more minutes of recess every day. There are two primary ways to make and influence public policy: Getting elected or appointed to a public office or communicating with somebody in a position of power. Since most young people are not public officials, the best bet for youth participation in the policy-making process is to communicate to public officials their thoughts, opinions and recommendations. There are a variety of ways for youth to make their ideas heard to policy-makers:

- Writing a persuasive letter or petition.
- Presenting ideas at a meeting of policy makers.
- Taking part in community organizing or activism.
- Developing ballot initiatives.
- Organizing marches or demonstrations.
- Using the media as a tool to educate and influence.



It's important to be creative when engaging in the policy-making process. All over the world, youth have used protests, rallies and letter writing to make historic changes. Combining current trends of high participation in community service with these proven avenues of youth engagement in public policy is the next step in civic engagement. In this way, youth can become fully engaged as citizens in our democracy.

ACTIVITY: Bill Becomes a Law (Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants simulate the lawmaking process and learn how citizens can participate. This activity can be tailored to the federal lawmaking process or your state's lawmaking process.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Understand the lawmaking process.
- Simulate the lawmaking process.
- Understand how citizens participate in the lawmaking process.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Responsible citizenship; decision making

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Public policy; knowledge of government

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard I.A. (K-4): Students should be able to provide a basic description of government.
- Standard V.F. (K-4): Students should be able to describe the means by which citizens can influence the decisions and actions of their government.
- Standard V.E. (5-8): Students should be able to describe the means by which Americans can monitor and influence politics and government.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Create five index cards with the roles of the House, Senate, committees, and President/Governor written on them, one role per card, as follows:
 - House of Representatives – More than half must vote in favor of a bill for it to be passed.
 - House Committee – Decides whether or not to vote on the bill in the House.
 - Senate – More than half must vote in favor of a bill for it to pass.
 - Senate Committee – Decides whether or not to vote on the bill in the Senate.
 - President/Governor – Signs or vetoes a bill once both the House of Representatives and the Senate have passed it.
- Create “bills” on index cards, one per card (see sample ideas in textbox following). Choose content that is interesting and relevant to participants (e.g., “There should be 30 extra minutes of recess per day.”). Include content likely to bring out both positive and negative reactions.
- Place “bills” face down on the chair in the middle of the semi-circle.

Ideas for sample bills

- Kids have to wear helmets whenever they ride bicycles.
- Vending machines will not be allowed in schools.
- There will be an extra hour of (subject) class every day and no (subject) class.
- Everyone in the school must volunteer every week (at a soup kitchen or other community organization).
- No one should be allowed to own a gun.
- Bullies are not allowed to have recess.
- Kids who wear glasses should not be allowed to hang out with kids who don't wear glasses.
- The United States will not be able to start a war.
- Kids are limited to 30 minutes of computer use per day.
- People who are guilty of lying will go to jail for one week.

ACTIVITY: Bill Becomes a Law

During the meeting

1. Explain that the group is going to discuss how decisions are made that affect the laws in our country. Ask participants to name a law. After several examples, ask if anyone knows how these laws came to be.
2. Distribute the handout *How Laws Are Made* to each participant. Explain that in government, an idea for a new law is called a *bill*. For a bill to become a real law, five groups/individuals must approve it: The House of Representatives, a House Committee, the Senate, a Senate Committee, and finally the President/Governor. Briefly explain what each group/individual role is in the lawmaking process, using the index cards previously prepared.
3. Divide participants into a House of Representatives and a Senate. Pick about one-third of the members of each House and Senate groups to act as committee members. Ask them to sit at the pre-configured tables. Give each group the index card that describes their role. Note: You can act as the President/Governor, or assign someone this role. The President/Governor should go to the podium/table.
4. Explain that the group is going to play the role of the government and decide if bills should become laws. Refer to the *How Laws Are Made* handout to remind everyone how the process works. Explain that there are a set of bills that the group needs to decide upon. Let the House and Senate committees alternate picking bills from the chair in the center of the semi-circle. Let them briefly talk about the bill idea in the committee group, and if they approve it, have them join the rest of the House/Senate to vote on the bill. If it's approved, pass it to the other (House/Senate) committee, and repeat the process. If at any point the bill is tabled or defeated, simply put it aside and move on to the next bill. If both groups approve the bill, then the President/Governor decides whether to sign or veto the bill. If it's signed, announce that the bill has become a law, and post it on the wall with tape.



ACTIVITY: Bill Becomes a Law

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Ask the group to share their reactions from the activity.

PROCESS

- Were there any bills that someone wanted to see passed but which were defeated?
- What was it like when the President/Governor vetoed a bill?
- Was it difficult to make a bill become a law?

GENERALIZE

- Where did the bills come from? Where do bills come from in real life? (Explain that average citizens can write bills and encourage representatives in the House or the Senate to introduce them.)
- Is it difficult for bad laws to get passed using this process? Why?

APPLY

- How can we share our ideas with our representatives in the House or the Senate?
- What are some of your ideas for real laws?
- What would you have to do then to get your ideas made into real laws?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Have the group write a letter to the local congressperson concerning a real issue See the “*Writing a Letter to a Member of Congress*” section of Chapter Eight for a sample letter.
- The group can elect a member from among them to serve as President/Governor for this activity.
- Let the group come up with their own ideas for bills, either before the activity or after they have decided on several of the prepared bills.
- Include the two-thirds override process into the activity if the President/Governor vetoes the bill (this should be explained prior to the simulation).

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Index cards
- Tape
- Markers or pens
- Photocopy of handout *How Laws Are Made* for each participant

TIME

60 minutes

SETTING

Four large tables total for House members, House committee members, Senate members and Senate committee members; and a small table or podium for the President/Governor. These should be arranged in a semi-circle. A chair is placed in the middle of the semi-circle (for bills).

HANDOUT: How Laws Are Made*

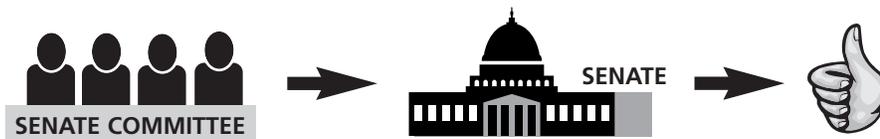
Let's pretend the voters from Senator Jones' state (constituents) want a law requiring seatbelts on school buses. He and his staff write a bill, which is a draft (early version) of the proposed law. The bill is then passed out to each Senator. A Standing Committee (a small, permanent group made up of legislators who studies and reports on bills) reviews the bill and does one of three things:

1. Sends the bill back with no changes.
2. Makes changes and sends it back.
3. Tables the bill – In other words, they can do nothing.

IN THE SENATE OF
THE UNITED STATES
BILL

Prohibiting the manufacture, sale, delivery, or importation of school buses that do not have seat belts. No person shall manufacture, sell, deliver, or import any school

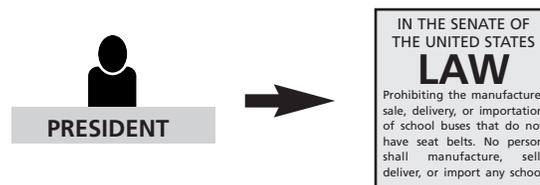
If the committee sends it back with no changes, then the bill goes on the Senate's calendar to be voted on. When that day comes, the bill is voted on and over half of the senators (51 of 100) must vote yes to pass it.



If the bill is passed by the Senate, it then moves to the other branch of Congress, the House of Representatives. The bill goes to a House committee, which studies the bill, and then is voted on by the representatives. Just as in the Senate, over half of the representatives (218 of 435) must vote yes to pass the bill.



If the bill is passed in both the Senate and House, the bill goes to the President of the United States. If the president signs the bill, it then becomes a law. It may also become law if the president does not sign it for 10 days. If the president rejects (vetoes) the bill, it can still become a law if two-thirds of the Senate and two-thirds of the House then vote in favor of the bill.



A bill may begin in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. So, Representative Smith could introduce a bill of her own just like Senator Jones. This bill would take the same steps only it would begin in the House of Representatives instead of the Senate.

*Obtained as public domain from U.S. Government Printing Office (July, 2007).

ACTIVITY: Petition Mission

(Simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants learn what a petition is and how it serves as a way of communicating with decision makers and authority figures. They think about real-life requests that they would make of authority figures and practice writing a petition.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Know what a petition is.
- Identify individuals and/or groups with authority.
- Consider rights and benefits they would like to have.
- Write a petition.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Responsible citizenship;
communication

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Public policy

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard I.A. (K-4): Students should be able to provide a basic description of government.
- Standard V.F. (K-4): Students should be able to describe the means by which citizens can influence the decisions and actions of their government.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.

During the meeting

1. Ask participants what they do when they want something from somebody. Allow for some responses. Ask what they do when they want something from a parent or a teacher. After several responses, explain that the group is going to explore a different way to ask for something from a person with authority.
2. Ask the group what the word *authority* means. Authority is the power to control, command and make decisions. Ask the group if they know anybody who has authority. If they are unhappy with the way someone uses authority, what can they do?
3. Divide participants into small teams of four or five each. Let them choose an authority figure that they all know (they may want to choose you or another person). Ask teams to brainstorm some requests they would like to make of the authority figure. After about a few minutes of discussion, ask teams to choose one request that they want to make of the authority figure.
4. Act as the authority figure and ask one person from each team to come forward (one at a time) and make the chosen request. Give a short, negative answer to the request. ("Sorry, that's not possible.")
5. Explain that a great way to communicate with an authority figure is to write a petition. A petition is a letter sent to someone with authority, asking for a favor or a right. It is signed by a group who all agree with what the petition is asking. Give the *Petition* handout to each team. Lead teams through each step to fill it out. Make sure they all sign the petition!
6. Role play, as in Step 4, but this time let all the members of each team approach you (the authority figure) and present their petition. Give a response that positively reinforces their request, such as, "Thank you for your request. It seems like you and your team have put a lot of thought into this issue. I will read this over and give you a response."

For younger groups, you may need to help participants fill out the petition form and generate requests.

ACTIVITY: Petition Mission

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Ask the group to share their reactions from the activity.

PROCESS

- How did it feel to be the one person who made the request of the authority figure?
- How did it feel to be part of the team that made the request of the authority figure?
- Which way of making a request was more effective? Why?
- Why is it important to have people sign the petition?

GENERALIZE

- When we want something from an authority figure, why is it better to have the support of many people?
- Which other issues could you write a petition for?

APPLY

- Which other people or group could we write petitions to?
- How can you use what you learned today to make changes?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Let participants write and deliver a petition to a real authority figure (for example, teacher, principal, community leader). Make sure it's respectful.
- Go to the Library of Congress web site (<http://thomas.loc.gov>) and search for real bills in Congress. Search for issues that might be interesting to your group. Prepare several bill summaries before the activity. Give participants the choice of which bill they would like to support or oppose with a petition. Let the group send the petition or write a letter (see "Writing a Letter to a Member of Congress" in Chapter Eight) to a U.S. member of Congress.

- Standard V.E. (5-8): Students should be able to describe the means by which Americans can monitor and influence politics and government.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Several photocopies of handout *Petition*

TIME

30 minutes

SETTING

Tables for each of the teams



HANDOUT: Petition

TITLE OF PETITION:

A petition of _____
(Name of group or individual that writes the petition)

Addressed to _____
(Name of the person that you will give the petition to)

We would like to tell you about the following issue:

What do you want?

Agreed upon by the following people:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

ISSUES AND GOVERNMENT



Chapter

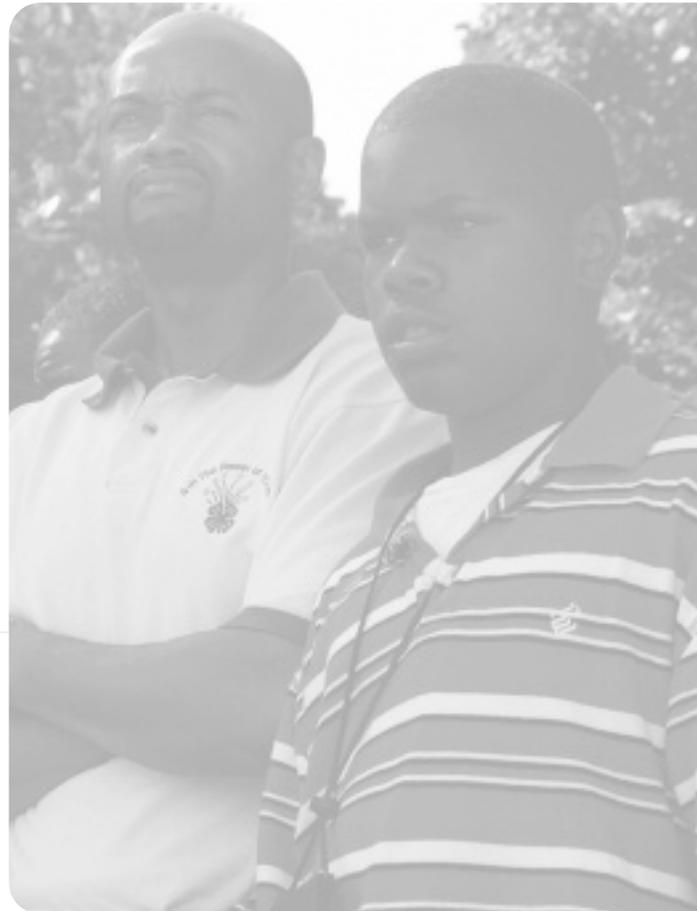
7

Issues and Government

"Government happens in the context of issues."

— Elizabeth Moore, Michigan State University Extension Public Policy Specialist

It can be difficult to develop and maintain an interest in things like government, community service and citizenship just for the sake of knowing about them. Some people enjoy memorizing the structure of government and the names of various government officials. Indeed, this is a key part of being civically engaged, but for many people it often takes more to spark an initial interest. When we begin to think about civic engagement in the context of issues and problems that affect our lives and the lives of people around us, the ideas of *government*, *community service* and *citizenship* become more real and meaningful.



Issues and Government

“The majority of young people are convinced that supporting a social cause is something they should do. However, there is a strong disparity between interest and involvement, an ‘activation gap,’ and there is significant room for growth.

Less than a third do something on a weekly basis and interest far exceeds involvement, as 38% describe themselves as very interested, but only 19% are very involved.”

— MTV, 2006.

KEEP IT FOCUSED ON THE ISSUES

Understanding and awareness of public and community issues is a key component of civic engagement. To stand up for the rights of oneself and others, it’s first necessary to look at where these rights are not being fully respected. It’s also important to look at how things can be improved upon even in instances where there are no clear problems.

When we come across a point or matter in our communities over which there is a desire for change, we are presented with an issue. Issues range from minor concerns (for example, whether or not to install a street light) to problems and concerns of greater consequence (for example, what to do about poverty). If a decision can be made to affect the matter, then the matter becomes an issue.

Issues of public importance affect all of us, to varying degrees of significance. Everyone in a community has an interest in how an issue is decided, whether they know it or not. This interest often takes the form of taxes that people pay to finance public spending. For example, a city may debate whether to install another street light. The outcome of this decision may mean very little to some people, but may be a critical safety issue to those who live near the proposed street light. But as taxpayers, everyone has an interest, since it’s their money that will pay for the streetlight. The taxes used for buying and installing the streetlight could have been spent instead on basketball hoops or dog-walking paths. Public and community issues are often a matter of money and a question of who pays for what.



Issues and Government

BECOMING INFORMED

Issues grab us. Some of us become interested because of the personal consequences decision making can have; some of us become interested out of compassion for others; and sometimes these two motivations overlap. To understand which issues our communities face, we have to research, ask questions, explore and think critically. Even if we are unaware of an issue, it can still impact us. There are a variety of ways to learn about community issues, and the activities in this chapter offer a number of approaches.

After we have an understanding of some key issues in our communities, the next step is to identify which issues we want to work on. These should be issues that we consider important and are passionate about. The problems that we focus on will serve as the vehicle for learning how local government works and how community action happens.

CONNECTIVITY

We live in an increasingly interconnected world. It's no longer sufficient to understand an issue or problem in the context of our neighborhood, city or country. What happens on the other side of the world can affect our lives here in the United States, just as our actions can have consequences for people in other cities, states and nations. This reality creates many challenges for civically minded individuals: we can't simply be concerned solely with the events of our own town or city.

An understanding of how issues go beyond boundaries is key to getting to the bottom of them. A good way of demonstrating the connectivity of issues is to examine how prominent national and international issues and news stories affect us in our communities. From there, we can brainstorm how we can, in turn, affect the issues. For example, how does the problem of world hunger affect our neighborhoods? There may be local concerns of malnutrition and poverty; there may be local organizations established with the mission of combating hunger; and tax dollars in our communities pay for food aid to foreign countries. The broader question is how can we, in our communities, affect world hunger?

To answer, we can use what we know about government, policy and service learning. Examples of taking action to combat world hunger would be writing to congressmen and women to increase aid to poor countries, organizing a fundraiser to benefit an international charity or educating community members about world poverty.



ACTIVITY: You Have to Represent (Simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants learn who can be a legislator and how candidates use issues to influence elections.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Define the term *legislator* and understand who can be a legislator and how they are elected.
- Understand the importance of voting.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Responsible citizenship

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Issues; knowledge of government

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard I.A. (K-4): Students should be able to provide a basic description of government.
- Standard III.E. (K-4): Students should be able to identify the members of the legislative branches and the heads of the executive branches of their local, state, and national governments.
- Standard V.E. (5-8): Students should be able to explain the importance of political leadership and public service in a constitutional democracy.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.

During the meeting

1. Ask the question, "Who makes laws?" After fielding responses, add that people who make laws are called *legislators*. There are different legislators for each school, city, county, state and country. Ask if anybody knows the name of a legislator, then give the names of some of the local, state or national legislators from your area.
2. Discuss with the group who can be a legislator. In most cases, anyone who is 18 years or older can become a legislator and make laws—a teacher, lawyer, doctor, businessperson—anybody. Even high-school students have been elected as legislators for their schools and towns. Explain that legislators are elected by voters.
3. Ask for two volunteers. Give each volunteer one profile from the *Candidate Profile* handout. (Give one volunteer Candidate Profile A1 and the other Candidate Profile A2.) Explain that each volunteer is a legislative candidate. The group must vote for one or the other by raising their hand. Let volunteers read their profiles and, afterwards, ask the group to vote for their favorite candidate. Announce the winner. Ask for two new volunteers and repeat with new pairs (B1 with B2, C1 with C2 and D1 with D2).



ACTIVITY: You Have to Represent

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

PROCESS

- How did you decide who to vote for?
- Why did you choose the candidate that you did?

GENERALIZE

- Why is it important to vote?
- What if only half the group voted—would the decision still be the same?
- When we vote in real elections, how can we make the best decision about which candidate to vote for? (Explain that legislators get elected by knowing what voters want and making decisions that benefit their voters.)
- As a candidate, how can you know what voters want?
- As a voter, how can you let your legislator know what you want?

APPLY

- What do you think you would have to do if you decided you wanted to be a legislator? (Explain that to be elected as a legislator, you have to run a campaign. Your campaign is how you make people want to vote for you.) How can you make people want to vote for you?

TRY THIS, TOO

- Gather information on candidates in real (recent or upcoming) elections. Explain to the group who the candidates are, which offices they are running for and what each office is responsible for. Present each candidate's (abbreviated) platform. Have the group vote (by ballot or hand raising) for the candidate they prefer. Also, try assigning real-life candidates to participants and let them research information about the candidate.
- As a follow-up, contact the local polling station to arrange a visit for the group. Coordinate a tour of the facility, an explanation of the voting process and an opportunity for participants to simulate voting using real ballots or voting machines.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Photocopy of handout *Candidate Profiles*, cut into individual profiles

TIME

30 to 45 minutes

SETTING

No tables necessary



HANDOUT: Candidate Profile

I am running for the U.S. Senate. I will end all wars that the United States is involved in. Instead of spending money on wars, I will spend it on helping the poor. I will make sure that everyone can get health care if they are sick or injured.

A1

I am running for the U.S. Senate. I will protect the United States from terrorism and attack any country that is a threat. I will lower taxes and make sure that everyone can get a good job.

A2

I am running for the State of _____ House of Representatives. I will build a new state prison to lock up more criminals. I will pass a law that makes people wear helmets when they ride bikes. I will ban vending machines from schools.

B1

I am running for the State of _____ House of Representatives. I will give more money to schools so that they can hire more teachers to help kids learn. I will pass a law that makes schools stop bullies. I will create more jobs for people.

B2

I am running for the City Council of _____. I will build a new park in the city with basketball and volleyball courts and baseball, football and soccer fields. I will fix all the sidewalks in the city and make it a \$100 fine for littering in a public place.

C1

I am running for the City Council of _____. I will build a youth center in the city with a library, computers and video games. I will install more street lights and hire extra police officers to make the city safer.

C2

I am running for the School Board of _____ School. I will require an extra hour of math everyday for all students. I will make the school day 30 minutes longer, and make recess shorter. I will buy 100 new computers for the school. I will hire more hall monitors to make school safer.

D1

I am running for the School Board of _____ School. I will let students run in the hallways. I will let students go on a field trip every week. I will buy new school buses. I will add an extra recess every day. Students also won't have to study English.

D2

ACTIVITY: The Campaign Game

(Simple)

DESCRIPTION

Participants meet with a city councilmember. They run a mock campaign for a local government office and create their own legislative platform ideas.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Create their own mock campaigns with platforms.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Responsible citizenship;
planning/organizing

MAJOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Issues; knowledge of government;
public policy

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard V.H. (K-4): Students should be able to explain and apply criteria useful in selecting leaders in their school, community, state, and nation.
- Standard III.F. (5-8): Students should be able to explain how political parties, campaigns, and elections provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process.

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Arrange for a city councilmember to visit the group. Send a letter to the official at least four weeks before the desired meeting date. (See “Sample Letter to a Public Official to Request a Meeting” in Chapter Eight.) Follow up with a telephone call to the official’s office soon after sending the letter, and make a second call near the meeting date to confirm. Make sure to send a thank-you letter afterward.

During the meeting

1. Ask the invited councilmember to speak about his or her responsibilities, work, campaign, career path and city issues. Give the group sufficient time to ask questions.
2. Explain to the group that they are all going to organize mock campaigns to run for a legislative position in their city government, part of the city council. Participants have to convince people to vote for them by coming up with ideas for laws and rules, designing campaign posters and giving a short speech telling why they would be good council members.
3. Give everyone a copy of the *Platform* handout. Explain that a platform is a list of things a legislator would want to do or their ideas to help the city. Have everyone fill in ideas that they have, rules they would like and things they would change for their city if elected. If the group struggles to come up with ideas, give examples (build new parks, have a 4th of July parade, give more money to libraries, etc.).
4. Next, using posterboard, markers and other decorations, let everyone make their own campaign poster. The posters should be catchy and include names, slogans and ideas from platforms.
5. Ask participants, one at a time, to give a short speech, using their posters to explain platforms and telling the group why they deserve votes.
6. Make sure to collect the participants’ completed *Platform* handouts for the next activity, “City Planning.”

It would be helpful to do the activity “Putting Your Neighborhood on the Map” in Chapter Five before trying this activity, so that the group is aware of community issues.

ACTIVITY: The Campaign Game

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

PROCESS

- How did you decide what to put on your platform?
- Did you choose your ideas based on what you want or on what you thought others would want?
- After hearing everyone's speech, which candidate(s) would you be most likely to vote for (other than yourself)? Why?

GENERALIZE

- How can we decide who to vote for in real elections?
- Where can we learn about what different real-life candidates believe and which opinions they have on issues?

APPLY

- What do you think you would have to do if you decided you wanted to be a legislator? (Explain that to be elected as a legislator, you have to run a campaign. Your campaign is how you make people want to vote for you.) How can you make people want to vote for you?

TRY THIS, TOO

- If it's more convenient and/or relevant, invite a member of the village council, township or county government to present at the meeting.
- Instead of conducting mock campaigns, organize elections for the after-school club government. Have offices for president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Encourage members to make themselves candidates and organize campaigns.
- Let participants organize a party/forum where everyone gives their speeches and presents their posters.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Pencils
- Posterboard
- Markers
- Other craft materials for decoration
- Photocopy of handout *Platform* for each participant

TIME

30 to 45 minutes

SETTING

Tables and chairs



ACTIVITY: City Planning

(Challenging)

DESCRIPTION

Participants practice consensus building and compromise by generating a list of policies for their city. This activity should be done after “The Campaign Game” activity.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

Participants:

- Build consensus to create city policies.

LEARNING AND LIFE SKILLS

Planning/organizing; cooperation

MAJOR CIVIC

ENGAGEMENT TOPICS

Issues; public policy; character

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

This activity is designed to meet the following voluntary K-4 and 5-8 standards from the National Standards for Civics and Government, published and directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

- Standard I.H. (K-4): Students should be able to explain why limiting the powers of government is important to their own lives.
- Standard II.D. (5-8): Students should be able to evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues in which fundamental values and principles are in conflict.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, HANDOUTS

- Completed *Platform* handouts from the previous activity
- Pencils
- 2 photocopies of handout *City Policies*

PROCEDURE

Before the meeting

- Review activity directions and materials.
- Complete “The Campaign Game” activity with the group to get them thinking about issues in their city that they support and oppose.

During the meeting

1. Explain that everyone has been elected to the city council. They are all now legislators! Explain that, as legislators, to pass laws and policies, they have to work with other legislators. This often involves *compromise*. Compromise means keeping some of your ideas and changing some ideas so that they fit with the larger group.
2. Break participants into two teams and give each the *City Policies* handout. Ask teams to use their platforms from “The Campaign Game” activity to come up with a list of five ideas for change for their city. Teams should appoint a recorder to write the ideas down on the handout. Provide guidance for each team as they go through the process of compromising.
3. Once each team has come up with a list, swap lists between the two teams.



ACTIVITY: City Planning

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

Reinforce the concepts participants have learned by asking the following reflection questions.

SHARE

- Which ideas are the same on both team lists?
- Which ideas are different?

PROCESS

- How did your team decide which ideas to put on the list or keep off the list?
- What was frustrating about compromising?
- What can your two teams do to create one final list?

GENERALIZE

- In government or in our communities, how can people with different ideas work together to make change?
- Why is it important to limit individual's or group's power to make rules and laws?

APPLY

- Let the two teams work together to come up with a final list of five laws.

TRY THIS, TOO

- Present the ideas that the group came up with for change to an actual city council. Deliver the ideas to the city council through the mail. Or, let youth participants attend the council meeting and present their ideas. Visit your city government web site to find out how to arrange a presentation at a council meeting.

TIME

30 to 45 minutes

SETTING

Table and chairs



HANDOUT: City Policies

We declare the five following policies for our city:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Councilmember signatures:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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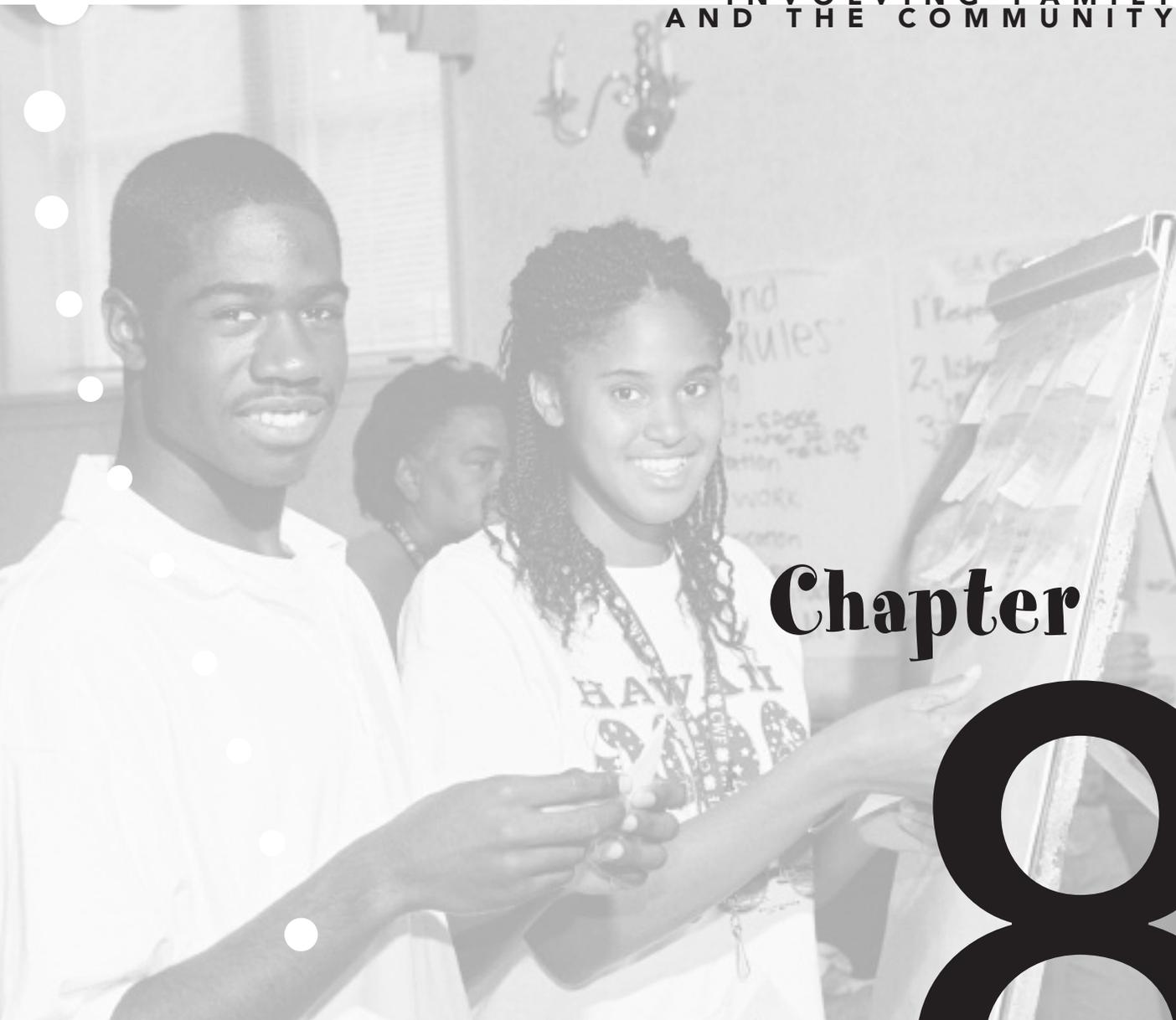
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INVOLVING FAMILY
AND THE COMMUNITY



Chapter

8

Promoting Your 4-H Afterschool Program

It's important to spread the word in your community about 4-H Afterschool programs. You'll increase participation by letting youth and their parents who could benefit from the programs know how to get involved. You'll achieve academic, government and business community support that may result in better facilities, funding and/or volunteer participation. By making 4-H Afterschool highly visible and showing its value to the community, you'll help ensure the future of after-school programming.

The web sites www.4husa.org and www.4hafterschool.org have resources to enhance your promotional efforts. Visit the Media Resources section to download graphics, sample news releases and get great ideas to try in your area.

Here are some ideas for how to promote your program:

1. *Engage youth and adults.* Ask youth and mentors to form a publicity committee to generate ideas and create a plan for publicizing the program.
2. *Get your story in print.* Draft a news release and send it to local newspapers, newsletters and community web sites. Think about places other than the main newspaper, such as school, residential community and local business newsletters as well.
3. *Hold special events.* Hold a high-profile special event to bring attention to your program, such as a Lights On Afterschool! event or a family activity night.
4. *Take photographs.* It's easy to use a digital camera to document the many memorable moments in your program. Send them to the local newspaper along with a news release about an interesting project. Create a scrapbook to display when you participate in community events. Use photographs to illustrate brochures and posters. Challenge youth to create collages that can be displayed in local libraries or stores. High-resolution digital photos are best, but high-quality prints also are acceptable. Remember to get parent/guardian permission to use the photos. Go to 4husa.org or 4hafterschool.org for a sample permission form.
5. *Participate in community events.* The youth in your programs are your best salespeople. Have them demonstrate the many activities they experience in your 4-H Afterschool program by setting up tables at art shows, food festivals and farmers markets or marching in holiday parades.
6. *Create a web site.* Involve youth in creating a web page on your program. Make sure you include photos and quotes from young people and timely content such as a calendar of events or stories about projects you're working on or have recently completed.
7. *Contact radio or television stations.* Ask youth and mentors to contact radio and television stations to pitch stories about your programs.
8. *Give presentations.* Community groups and government bodies are always interested in having guests share their activities. Ask youth to give presentations about what they did and learned while participating in your program.
9. *Prepare an impact report.* Periodically, prepare a brief report about the impact and outcomes of the program. Share this report with key decision makers and potential funders in your community.



Promoting Your 4-H Afterschool Program

COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

An excellent way to increase the visibility of your 4-H Afterschool program is to get your group engaged in community service-learning projects. Not only is this a way for youth to begin seeing themselves as members of the community and learning about their responsibility as citizens, it's also a way for community members to learn about the activities of your 4-H Afterschool program. See Chapter Five for more information about how to start a community service-learning project.

Some community service ideas that work especially well with 5- to 8-year olds include:

- Leading bingo games, singing favorite tunes, talking with residents and bringing small pets on visits to adult foster care or retirement homes. Youth could also put on a skit or a puppet show.
- Painting trash barrels and benches at community parks and county fairgrounds. They can also paint over graffiti at these sites.
- Planting flowers and trees in cemeteries and local parks and at community centers and county fairgrounds.
- Painting and filling clay pots with plants for delivery to elderly or ailing people.
- Making and hanging decorations and artwork at community centers, facilities for people with disabilities and hospitals.
- Making sandwiches for local soup kitchens.
- Preparing and performing puppet shows at libraries, hospitals and community festivals.
- Trick-or-treating for canned goods.
- Donating their used books, toys and clothes to a local charity. The items could also be sold at a group garage sale and the profits given to a local charity.
- Being pen pals with overseas U.S. military personnel. (Younger 4-H'ers may need help from older members.)
- Hosting a party to welcome new youth into the community.
- Collecting litter in a park or along sidewalks.
- Decorating a bulletin board at a community center or library.
- Collecting new or gently used toys for a shelter.



Promoting Your 4-H Afterschool Program

Community service ideas that work especially well with 9- to 12-year olds include:

- Collecting backpacks and school supplies for children who can't afford them.
- Making bird feeders and setting up bird feeding stations at hospitals, schools and community sites.
- Brainstorming issues in the school or community to research and then presenting findings to school, city or county officials with the goal of doing a service project to solve the problem.
- Researching after-school program issues (for example, respect for fellow after-school team members) and making posters to display concerning the issue.
- Setting up pen-pal relationships with children from another country or another part of the United States and sharing ways to help neighborhoods.
- Starting an after-school literature or reading club with younger children.
- Painting trash barrels and benches at community parks and county fairgrounds.
- Planting flowers in cemeteries and local parks and at community centers, facilities for people with disabilities and hospitals.
- Collecting hats, scarves and mittens and using them to decorate a holiday tree for a local shelter.
- Making cards for Veterans Day. Celebrating with veterans at a veterans organization or veterans hospital.
- Collecting new sleeping bags and teddy bears for homeless children. Purchasing and decorating bear-sized T-shirts with fabric paint, then visiting a shelter to give the donated items to children. Sharing a meal with residents and doing story time together as a group.
- Becoming a pen pal with an elderly or shut-in resident in the community.
- Helping serve dinner at a homeless shelter.
- Working as volunteers at the Special Olympics.
- Gathering gently used books and toys that have been outgrown and donating the items to children in foster care.

Relationships With Policy Makers

Working closely with policy makers enhances young people's civic competency and gives the program more exposure. Policy makers can be important allies in expanding the resources available to support after-school programs. By showing policy makers the educational, social and political benefits of the 4-H Afterschool program, they will be more inclined to support after-school programming in general and push for expanded resources for these programs.

One option for making contact with policy makers is to write letters in support or opposition to public policy proposals. These letters will make policy makers aware of the group's interest in public policy and their experience in learning about civic engagement. Another way to foster a relationship is to invite policy makers to meet with the after-school group. Following are two sample letters for initiating these types of outreach.



Relationships With Policy Makers

Writing a Letter to a Member of Congress

To Your U.S. Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

To Your U.S. Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Smith:

Dear Representative Smith:

Begin by clearly stating who you are and the purpose of your letter. As the activity leader, you will need to research current legislation beforehand and paraphrase it, using terms that are understandable to your group. You can find current legislation in Congress at <http://thomas.loc.gov> and <http://www.gpoaccess.gov>. Example:

My name is John Doe, and I am a member of the 4-H Afterschool program at Anytown Elementary School in Anytown, USA. Our group is learning about and practicing civic engagement to become better citizens in our democracy. I am writing today to urge you to support/oppose (choose one the following prefixes with the appropriate number, ex. House Bill, H.R.1069):

House Bills: "H.R.____"

Senate Bills: "S.____"

House Resolutions: "H.RES.____"

Senate Resolutions: "S.RES.____"

House Joint Resolutions: "H.J.RES.____"

Senate Joint Resolutions: "S.J.RES.____"

Make one or two points in support of your position. Include facts and statistics to strengthen your argument. Information relating to legislation can often be found in the text of bills or resolutions; further research can be done with books and newspapers, by going online, or through interviews. Example:

Gang violence is a serious problem in many communities in the United States. There are an estimated 24,500 gangs in this country. Youth in gangs commit 11 percent of all crimes and are three times as likely to commit a violent crime compared to youth who are not in gangs. In my neighborhood in Anytown there are several gangs, and children in my neighborhood don't feel safe.

Close your letter by restating you purpose and by asking for follow-up. Example:

H.R. 1069 will help improve the gang situation in the United States. Can I count on your support for H.R. 1069 and for America's youth? Please let me know if I can count on your support in Congress.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Relationships With Policy Makers

Sample Letter to a Public Official to Request a Meeting

Date

Councilman John Doe
Anytown City Council Building
1234 Main Street
Anytown, USA 12345

Dear Councilman Doe,

On behalf of the 4-H Afterschool program at Anytown Elementary School, I am writing to invite you to attend one of our meetings to talk with our young people. Our group has an interest in civic engagement, and part of that is learning about how government works. It would be a great opportunity for our members to meet with you and learn more about the human side of government and politics. We believe that this experience would go a long way toward increasing civic interest and participation in our young people.

We would appreciate it if you could visit our group at Anytown Elementary School and talk for approximately 30 minutes about the responsibilities of your office, the type of work that you do and how you became involved in politics. We would also like to have time for a brief question and answer period at the conclusion of your remarks.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We will be in touch with your office regarding a mutually convenient time to meet. If you have any questions, please contact me at (123) 555-1234.

Sincerely,

Involving Families and Community Members

Another way to publicize the activities of a 4-H Afterschool program is to get others involved. Invite family and community members to join in the process as youth learn about local issues. Encourage young people to do research projects on community issues, interview policy makers or members of public organizations or make visits to government buildings. There is ample opportunity for adult involvement in these activities, and the collective attitude of adult-youth partnerships has been shown to strengthen civic engagement. The following is a sample letter to parents or guardians encouraging their participation in their child's research project on a community issue.



Involving Families and Community Members

Sample Letter to Parent/Guardian in Support of a Research Project

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As part of your child's participation in the 4-H Afterschool program at Anytown Elementary School, he/she is learning about civic engagement. An important part of being civically engaged is identifying and understanding issues in the community. Your child's group has identified gang violence as an issue that they would like to learn more about. Prior to next week's meeting, all of the club members are doing research on this issue to better understand it and to share their findings. You can help your child research this issue in a variety of ways:

- Talk with your child about this issue.
- Visit the local library to find books or articles related to this issue.
- Browse the Internet to find resources related to this issue.
- Identify someone who knows something about this issue for your child to interview.
- Take a walk in your neighborhood to help your child learn more about this issue.

Thank you for your participation in helping your child learn more about civic engagement!

Sincerely,

Chapter References

Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development. *Community service activity ideas for 5- to 8-year-olds*. Retrieved April 5, 2007, from <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/commserv/commserv5-8.html>.

Michigan State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development. *Community service activity ideas for 9- to 12-year-olds*. Retrieved April 5, 2007, from <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/commserv/commserv9-12.html>.





Resources

Advanced Public Speaking Institute

<http://www.public-speaking.org>

Extensive resources on various dimensions of public speaking that can be adapted for younger audiences.

American FactFinder, U.S. Census Bureau.

<http://factfinder.census.gov>

Enter your city, town, county or zip code to get a fact sheet with social, economic and housing characteristics of your community.

CHARACTER COUNTS! Josephson Institute of Ethics

<http://www.charactercounts.org/defsix.htm>

Provides information and resources connected to the Six Pillars of Character.

Contacting The Congress

<http://www.visi.com/juan/congress>

An up-to-date database of congressional contact information; useful for writing letters to members of Congress.

Cyberschoolbus Global Teaching and Learning Project, United Nations

<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus>

Offers a global education perspective through numerous resources and curricula. Topics include poverty, racial discrimination, world hunger, indigenous people, peace and human rights.

Elementary Research Techniques, Saint Paul Public Schools Educational Technology Department, St. Paul Minnesota

http://connect.spps.org/Elementary_Research_Techniques2.html

Provides a useful model for helping elementary-aged youth conduct research projects.

Lights On Afterschool, Afterschool Alliance

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/lights_on/index.cfm

A variety of resources to help promote your after-school program, including sample advertisements and posters, invitations to the public and to policy makers and tips for getting press coverage.

Michigan 4-H Youth Development: 4-H Citizenship, Leadership and Service — Community Service

<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/differen.html>

Provides community service-learning activities and ideas for youth 5 to 19 years old.

Process Speech Writing Model, Basic Public Speaking, 2nd Edition

<http://www.capital.net/~bps2/ProcessSpeechWriting.pdf>

A one-page handout that provides a clear, concise model for organizing a speech.

Public Adventures, National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System, Inc.

<http://www.n4hccs.org/citizenship>

An active citizenship curriculum designed to help youth contribute to the world around them and develop a life-long commitment to civic engagement.

This Is My Home, Human Rights Resource Center, University of Minnesota

<http://www.hrusa.org/thisismyhome>

K-12 activities, lesson plans and other resources to help teach about human rights and implement a human rights project in your school.

Thomas, The Library of Congress

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Allows you to perform keyword searches to explore legislation in the current Congress.

Tolerance.org

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

Resources and activities for promoting tolerance and encouraging an appreciation for diversity.





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MetLife Foundation

4-H and MetLife Foundation have partnered for more than a decade to provide meaningful opportunities for youth across America. In 2007, MetLife Foundation expanded its support of 4-H to improve the quality of after-school programs, infuse civic engagement into the after-school setting and increase the number of youth engaged in high quality after-school programs.