

INSPIRING CIVICS

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Session One

A HISTORY OF CIVIC ACTION

OBJECTIVE

In two sessions, students will be introduced to civic participation, understand how it impacts their lives, and create strategies for engaging with civic issues.

Time

Two to three 45-min. class periods

Materials

- Student Worksheet 1
- Internet access
- Index cards
- Paper
- Pencil or pen

1. Ask students to share what they think civic participation means. Many of them might think of voting or activism. Explain that civic participation also includes small acts, like paying taxes and following laws.

2. Explain that civic participation is how citizens gain and maintain their rights. Discuss how the 15th and the 19th Amendments extended the right to vote to black men and to women, respectively, and that it wasn't until 1965 that Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

3. Ask students how people who once weren't allowed to vote might have gained that right. Answers might include marches, boycotts, and petitions. Have students think about what it might have been like

to participate in those movements. The fight proved arduous; activists were often harassed, assaulted, and arrested. They persisted, however, until their voices were heard and new legislation took shape.

4. Discuss other civic and social issues students care about on the local and national level. Ask them for examples of civic participation they may have seen in the media. As a class, examine the circumstances or outcomes surrounding each act. Ask: If students aren't yet able to vote, how might they still get involved?

5. Ask students to research civic participation using reliable sources such as print, online, or TV news outlets. Instruct them to create a list of civic participation activities and strategies.

CLASS ASSIGNMENT Civic Strategy Game

1 Ask students to write different civic or social issues on 10–15 index cards (see some ideas below).

2 Have students use their list of civic participation strategies to write action ideas (e.g., petition, march) on separate index cards. Divide students into groups. Each group will select a “judge” for round 1.

3 To start, the judge selects an Issue Card. Each player chooses one of their Action Cards to address the issue. The judge decides which action is the best solution to the issue. The student with the winning Action Card keeps the Issue Card.

4 Have students choose a new judge and play more rounds. When there are no more Issue Cards, the student who collected the most Issue Cards in each group wins.



Sample Civic and Social Issues

- Age restrictions on voting
- Black Lives Matter
- EPA funding
- Gun control
- NFL/Anthem kneeling
- Plastic-bag ban
- School uniforms and regulation of student attire
- Soda tax
- Vaping bans
- Voter ID requirements

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Session Two

GETTING INVOLVED



1. Ask students how they think activist movements start. Explain that some movements are a spontaneous response to an individual event, while other movements are built on actions meant to address longstanding, systemic issues. Tell students that the Parkland, Florida, high school students who are advocating for gun regulation represent an example of the former group—it's a response to a deadly shooting that occurred at their school as well as other related tragedies in recent years. The Occupy Wall Street protests of late 2011, on the other hand, weren't driven by a specific event. They were rooted in a number of causes—including a criticism of capitalism and concern over growing income inequality in the United States.

2. Explain that civic participation takes place whenever individuals gather to discuss ideas and work to address their concerns—whether that's online, at community meetings, or in public places. It can be big and national (such as the Civil Rights movement) or small and local (working to change local traffic laws). It can include direct action (marches and protests), legislative process (lobbying to change laws), and public dialogue.

3. Discuss how the nature of civic participation has changed over the years. For example, social media has made it easier for people who care about similar causes to connect and spread awareness. Social media has also made it easy to simply “like” something and move on. Real change often requires people getting involved in their communities. Successful civic campaigns must raise awareness, have specific goals, and inspire others to take action and follow up on successes.

4. Ask students how they would build a campaign to address a social issue. Challenge them to list issues that concern them, and ask how they might address those issues. Tell students that they will take part in civic action using the class assignment below.

EXTEND IT!

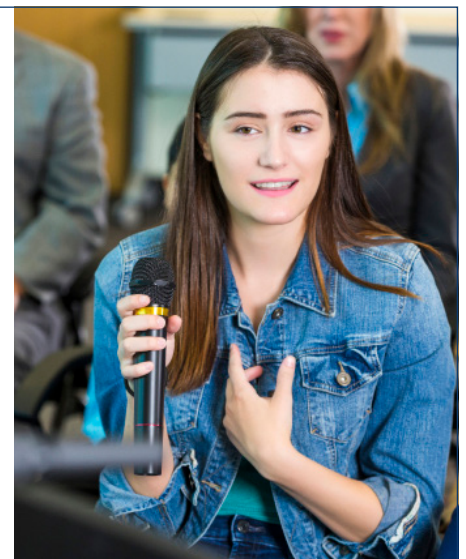
Use additional time to expand upon a student civic campaign proposal or develop one as a class. Put the plan into action in your school or local community.

CLASS ASSIGNMENT Host a Mock Town Hall

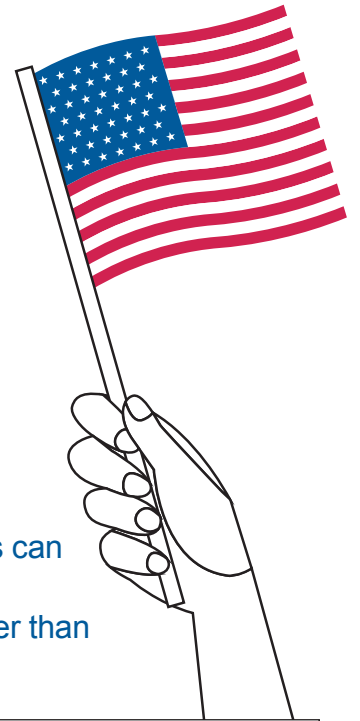
1 Choose a topic as a class to cover in your town hall discussion. It should be a local issue, such as proposals to increase minimum wages, taxing sugary drinks, or banning plastic straws.

2 Distribute Student Worksheet 1 and have students use it to plan a civic campaign based on the chosen issue.

3 Host the event by giving students roles of moderator, mayor, and public officials responsible for policies related to the topic. Other students can play concerned citizens. They'll ask questions, express opinions, and argue assigned sides. This may take the form of a controlled debate.



NAME: _____



PLAN A CIVIC CAMPAIGN!

Learn about a civic issue that matters to you and develop a strategy to address it.

PART 1: GET THE FACTS!

Step 1 Identify what your civic issue will be. Use a topic discussed in class, one from your own experience, or one that you've seen recently in the news.

Step 2 Using reliable sources, research the issue. Remember: Many civic issues can inspire passion—and therefore bias—on both sides. Find reported facts (e.g., an accounting of how many tons of plastic is dumped in the ocean every year), rather than rely on emotionally charged articles. Use facts to draw your own conclusions.

MY ISSUE	
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THE FACTS	
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MY POSITION	
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PART 2: PLAN A CAMPAIGN!

MY GOALS	

MY STRATEGY	

MY FOLLOW-UP	
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CHANGE TAKES TIME! START PLANNING AND MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.