

# Civics IRL\*

## A Lesson Guide for Teachers

Students will analyze and develop a plan to bring awareness to an issue they care about.

+ Lesson Extensions  
and Differentiation



\* That's teen speak for *In Real Life!*

# Your Students Can Change the World!

## Welcome, Teachers!

With all that is happening in the news today, it can be easy for students to feel powerless. But nothing can be further from the truth. As you can see in the special supplement to *Junior Scholastic*, students across the country are making a real difference in their schools, their states, and even the global community. After completing these activities, your students will be able to analyze and develop a plan to bring awareness to an issue they care about.



Mike Floyd, 19, of Pearland, TX, is the youngest person ever elected to his district's school board.

Photo: Melissa Philip/Houston Chronicle

## Lesson Duration: 60 Minutes

**Pre-lesson assignment** Have students read the special supplement to *Junior Scholastic* in class the day before or for homework. Have them consider which activist they most relate to in their reading as prep work for the lesson.

### 1. Do Now (10 minutes)

Ask students which student activist story in *Junior Scholastic* they chose to focus on in their prep work. Direct students to describe the activist, their cause, and/or how they worked to make change. Have a few students share their answers with the class.

**Key point** The activists in the magazine found something they were passionate about and acted on it to bring change. As middle school students, you can do that too!

### 2. Group Brainstorm (10 minutes)

Divide students into predetermined groups of four. Ask each group to choose a notetaker, a presenter, and two brainstormers. (All students will participate in the group work, but choosing

roles will help them focus.) Then ask students to brainstorm things in their school or their lives that need to change and write their list on a sheet of paper. To jump-start the brainstorming session, offer some relevant examples, including school start times, dress codes, or other current issues. Direct students to consider things they feel strongly about.

### 3. Full-Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Ask each notetaker to write their group's list of topics on the board. Once all lists are written, ask each group's presenter to share their list with the class, explaining the group's reasoning behind each item on the list. Once all groups have presented, direct each group to collaboratively choose an issue from any of the lists on the board. This is the issue they'll work on for the remainder of the class.

### 4. Collaborative Group Work (15–20 minutes)

Each group will now take an in-depth look at their issue. Ask each group to write its answers to the following questions on a sheet of paper to hand in:

1. What's your group's issue?
2. Who does this issue affect?
3. What needs to change about this issue?
4. Why does this issue need to change?
5. What might you and your group members do to bring awareness to the issue?

Direct students to think big here, using the profiles in *Junior Scholastic* as a reference point. For instance, can they create a poster campaign to display in the school hallways? Can they request a meeting with their school principal to discuss the issue? Connect with an organization in the Get Involved! resource guide ([scholastic.com/levis](http://scholastic.com/levis)) for ideas.

### 5. Share and Reflect (10–15 minutes)

Ask each group's presenter to tell the class the issue they chose, why they think it needs to change, and one thing they came up with to bring awareness to the issue. Finally, on an exit ticket, ask students to answer the following: What's one next step your group can take to start to bring awareness to this issue?

## Differentiation

**Lower level** Recap the student activist stories by writing key names and issues on the board before students complete the Do Now activity above. Write some initial high-interest issues on the board to assist with brainstorming and help students answer the questions about their chosen issue with guided questions.

**Higher level** Have students think of ways they can turn their ideas into action. Can they call their representatives? Join a volunteer group?

## Key Standards

CCSS RH.6-8.1	NCSS II.a
CCSS SL.6-8.1	NCSS II.b
CCSS SL.6-8.4	NCSS III.g
CCSS SL.6-8.6	NCSS IV.g
CCSS W.6-8.2	NCSS IV.h
CCSS W.6-8.4	NCSS IX.b
CCSS W.6-8.10	NCSS X.a-j



# How to use the Get Involved! resource guide

Download the guide at [scholastic.com/levis](http://scholastic.com/levis) and help your students research and evaluate opportunities to volunteer in their communities.

## Lesson Duration: 60 Minutes

### 1. Do Now (5 minutes)

Write the following on the board and ask students to share their thoughts with a partner:

What does it mean to be an activist?

Direct students to use their prior knowledge of activism; reference the student activist profiles in their reading.

Ask pairs to share their responses with the class.

### 2. Full-Class Brainstorm (10 minutes)

Direct students to consider their own thoughts on the word “activist” and those of their peers, and create a class-driven, working definition of “activist” on the board. The class definition may be something like “a person who works for change.” Once a class definition is established, ask students, individually, to write down ideas on what an activist does to create change.

### 3. Full-Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Open the floor for students to share their ideas on what activists do to create change. Facilitate the discussion by asking students to elaborate on their answers so the class gets a clear picture of what activists do. Some examples might include: activists speak up to their principals or representatives about things they find unfair; they spread the word about the issues they care about; and they volunteer their time with organizations designed to help advance their causes.

### 4. Collaborative Pair Work (25 minutes)

Direct students to come up with a cause they care about with their partners from step 1. Offer examples to help jump-start thinking: Homelessness, animal rights, childhood cancers, immigration, etc. Once pairs have decided on a cause, direct them to do the following:

1. With the Get Involved! resource guide as a jumping-off point, use the Internet to find three organizations that deal with their cause.

2. Create a three-column chart that weighs the attributes of each organization. On the chart, note:

- a. the name and mission of the organization
- b. its primary activities (i.e., ways of helping the cause)
- c. how students can become involved in the organization

3. Once the chart is created, evaluate the three organizations and put a star at the top of the column for the organization that they think offers the best opportunity to get involved.

### 5. Share and Reflect (10 minutes)

Ask each student pair to share the name and mission of the organization they chose, as well as to explain why they decided that this organization offered the best opportunity to get involved.

Exit ticket: Have students write the name of an organization that another classmate shared that sounds interesting to them. Add a short note on why it sounds interesting.



## Key Standards

CCSS RH.7–8.1  
CCSS RH.7–8.2  
CCSS SL.7–8.1

CCSS SL.7–8.4  
CCSS SL.7–8.6  
CCSS W.7–8.2

CCSS W.7–8.10  
NCSS X.a–j





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## Extend the Lesson

### Think Big!

Give groups one class period to create a rough plan of change for their chosen cause or issue. Direct them to think about how they can bring awareness to that issue and what they'd like to see changed. Ask them to consider who in the school they could present their ideas to. (They should also use the Find Your Rep! tool at [scholastic.com/levis](https://www.scholastic.com/levis) to determine who their representatives are and how they might be able to help.)

### Encourage Involvement

Ask students to reach out to their identified organization and get involved in an activity that it sponsors. You might choose to have students do this project to fulfill community service hours if your school so allows. Students can keep a journal of their volunteer experiences, reflecting on their activities and what sort of change they brought about (even the smallest actions make changes!). At the end of the marking period or year, host a

volunteer showcase, where students will present their experiences, read excerpts from their journals, and report on how their volunteer work has made a positive change for their issue. Invite members of the administration, school board, and community to this showcase.

#### Key Standards

CCSS RH.7–8.1	CCSS W.7–8.2
CCSS SL.7–8.1	CCSS W.7–8.4
CCSS SL.7–8.4	CCSS W.7–8.10
CCSS SL.7–8.6	

## There's more!

Check out the Civics IRL website at [scholastic.com/levis](https://www.scholastic.com/levis) for an inspiring video to share with your class and a volunteer resource guide. Your students will learn how they can make a real difference in their community.

Inspire your students to learn how their government works at [scholastic.com/wethepeople](https://www.scholastic.com/wethepeople).