

Civics for Kids: Building Tomorrow Together

A program designed to teach elementary students about democracy, community, and responsible citizenship through fun, engaging activities and practical applications. Just as our nation's Constitution was written to ourselves and our posterity," this project is designed to help your students understand how the actions we take today help shape a better world for the generations that follow.

Duration: 10 Weeks (1 Lesson per Week)

Grade Level: Elementary (Grades K-5)

Curriculum Overview

Lesson Topics:

1. Our Community Helpers
2. Our School Rules
3. Voting in the Classroom
4. Being a Good Neighbor
5. The Power of Sharing
6. Our Rights and Responsibilities
7. Making a Positive Change
8. Every Voice Matters
9. Learning About Local Government
10. Our Civic Heroes

General Lesson Structure

1. **Introduction (5 minutes):** Start with a discussion or thought-provoking question to engage students.
2. **Reading Time (10 minutes):** Read a text relevant to the topic.
3. **Constitution Connection (10 minutes):** Relate the lesson to the U.S. Constitution in an age-appropriate way.
4. **Activity (15 minutes):** Engage students with a hands-on activity to apply their comprehension of the lesson.
5. **Closing and Reflection (5 minutes):** Summarize the key points and encourage students to reflect on their learning through writing, discussion, and collaborative wrap-up activities.

Program Goals:

- Foster an early understanding of civic engagement, community roles, and democratic principles.
- Promote creative expression through art, writing, and multimedia projects.
- Encourage students to become responsible, informed, and active members of their school and community.

Preamble to the Constitution

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Break It Down for Accessibility

- Teach it phrase by phrase using age-appropriate language.
 - *"We the People"* → "All of us together."
 - *"More perfect Union"* → "Making our country work better."
 - *"Establish Justice"* → "Making fair rules for everyone."
 - *"Insure domestic Tranquility"* → "Keeping peace at home."
 - *"Provide for the common defence"* → "Keeping us safe."
 - *"Promote the general Welfare"* → "Helping everyone have a good life."
 - *"Secure the Blessings of Liberty"* → "Protecting our freedom forever."

Civics for Kids: Building Tomorrow Together

Key Terms and Vocabulary

Constitution - A big set of rules that tells how our government is set up and what rights we have.

Community Helper - A person who works to help and take care of others in the community, like teachers, fire fighters, or doctors.

Preamble - The first part of the Constitution that says why it was written and what it is trying to accomplish.

Majority Rule - This means the choice that most people want is the one everyone will follow.

Voting - The act of making a choice or decision by casting a ballot in an election or vote.

Democracy - A system of government where people have the power to make decisions, often through voting.

Election - A time when people vote to choose leaders or decide on laws for the city, state, or entire nation.

Campaign - An organized course of action in which a person or group of people work to get people to support their idea and/or vote for them.

Pre Assessment

Lesson Title: Voting in the Classroom

Target Grade Level: Elementary (Grades 3-5)

Pre-Assessment:

Objective: Gauge students' initial understanding of voting, democracy, and decision-making within their community (the classroom).

Instructions: Before the lesson begins, have students answer the following questions individually. These questions are meant to assess their prior knowledge and spark interest in the lesson.

1. **What is voting?**
 - a. A way to decide who will be our friend
 - b. A way to make decisions by letting everyone choose
 - c. A game where we count points
 - d. A way for one person to make all the decisions

2. **Why do people vote?**
 - a. To solve disagreements fairly
 - b. To make everyone happy
 - c. To win prizes
 - d. To see who is strongest

3. **What does it mean when something is a “democracy”?**
 - a. Only adults get to make decisions
 - b. Everyone has a say in making decisions
 - c. One group of people gets to decide everything
 - d. It’s a way for some people to be the boss

4. **What should you do if you don’t get your way in a vote?**
 - a. Argue until you get what you want
 - b. Accept the decision and try again next time
 - c. Ignore the results and keep doing what you want
 - d. Stop voting because it’s not fair

5. **Circle True or False:**

Voting is important because it lets everyone have a say.

 - True
 - False

Post-Assessment:

Objective: Evaluate what students learned from the lesson and determine whether their understanding of voting and democracy improved.

Instructions: After the lesson and activities, students will answer the following questions individually. This assessment will help you gauge the effectiveness of the lesson and the students' learning progress.

1. **What is voting?**
 - a. A way to let everyone have a say and make decisions together
 - b. A way for teachers to decide everything
 - c. A game that kids play at recess
 - d. A way to pick the tallest person in class

2. **Why is it important to vote in the classroom?**
 - a. To make sure everyone's voice is heard
 - b. To let the teacher decide everything
 - c. To create arguments about choices
 - d. To always favor the same group of people

3. **What does democracy mean?**
 - a. A group of leaders decides everything
 - b. People make decisions by voting and everyone has a say
 - c. Only kids get to make decisions
 - d. A way for people to argue and not agree

4. **If your choice doesn't win in a vote, what should you do?**
 - a. Complain and stop participating
 - b. Accept the decision and accept the results
 - c. Keep asking until you get your way
 - d. Make your own separate vote

5. **Circle True or False:**

Voting is important because it helps the class make fair decisions and lets everyone share their ideas.

 - True
 - False

6. **Bonus Question (Short Answer):**

Can you think of a time when voting helped solve a problem fairly? Write or draw what happened.

Assessment Notes:

- **Pre-assessment Purpose:** The pre-assessment is designed to activate prior knowledge and identify misconceptions that can be corrected during the lesson.
- **Post-assessment Purpose:** The post-assessment checks for understanding of key concepts taught during the lesson, such as the purpose of voting, democracy, and how to accept the results of a vote, even when the outcome isn't in one's favor.
- **Evaluation:** Compare students' pre and post-assessments to track growth in understanding. Look for changes in how students describe voting, their recognition of fairness, and their ability to relate the importance of democratic practices to real life classroom situations.

Lesson 1: Our Community Helpers

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will identify community helpers and understand their roles in promoting “general welfare” as described in the Preamble of the Constitution.

Focus Skills:

- **Identifying and Applying Civic Knowledge** Students learn about the roles of community helpers and how they contribute to the concept of "general welfare" as outlined in the Constitution.
 - **Engaging in Civil Discourse** Students practice sharing ideas, listening to others, and reflecting on the contributions of community helpers during discussions and the classroom interview activity.
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Materials Needed

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Simplified version of the Preamble: “We the People ... promote the general welfare...”
 - Text: “Our Community Helpers” (provided)
 - Drawing paper and crayons/markers
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Lesson Outline

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Discussion Prompt:** Begin by asking, "Who are some people who help us in our community?"
- **Engage:** Write student answers on the board (e.g. firefighters, doctors, teachers, postal workers, police officers, sanitation workers).
- **Connection:** Explain how these community helpers keep our community safe, healthy, and running smoothly.

Reading Time (10 Minutes)

- Read aloud: "**Our Community Helpers**"

“In every town and city, there are special people who help us every day. They are called community helpers, and they play important roles in making our lives better! Firefighters help keep us safe from fires. Police officers protect us from harm. Doctors and nurses help us feel better when we’re sick. Teachers help us learn new things every day. We can also think of postal workers, who bring our mail, even on rainy or snowy days. Sanitation workers, like those who collect our garbage, keep our streets and neighborhoods clean and fresh. These community helpers make sure our towns are safe and healthy places to live!”

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. Who is a community helper you think is very important? Why?
2. How do these helpers make our lives better?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the Constitution:**

- Explain that the Constitution is like a big rule book for our country.
- Share: "It helps keep everyone safe and treated fairly, just like rules in school."

- **Define the Constitution in Kid-Friendly Terms:**

"The Constitution is a plan for how our country works. It tells us how leaders are chosen, how laws are made, and how people are treated."

- **Focus on "General Welfare":**

- **Share the simplified Preamble:** "We the People... promote the general welfare..."
- Explain: "general welfare" means keeping everyone safe and healthy, just like our community helpers do.

Activity: "General Welfare Helpers" (15 Minutes)

- **Introduce the Activity:**

- Ask students to draw a picture of their favorite community helper and how they help others.

- **Drawing Prompt:**

- Ask students to draw a picture of their favorite community helper and show what they do to help others.
- For younger students (K-1), consider showing visuals such as a clip (["What is a Community Helper"](#)) from *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* to provide examples of community helpers.
- For older students (4-5), ask them to include a sentence explaining the role of their chosen community helper.

- **Share:**

- Invite students to explain their drawings and describe how their helper promotes "general welfare."

Closing and Connection (5 Minutes)

- **Review Key Points:** Community helpers keep our neighborhoods safe, clean, and healthy. They show us what it means to care for others.
 - **Reflection Prompt:** "How can we show appreciation for the community helpers around us?"
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Suggested Booklist: Our Community Helpers

- My First Brain Quest First Words: Community Helpers
- We are the Builders by Deepa Iyer
- Night in the City by Julie Downing

Lesson Extension: "Meet Our Community Helpers" - Classroom Interview Activity

Overview

This learning extension activity allows students to connect with community helpers through a classroom visit and creates opportunities to learn more about what they do. Students can practice "interviewing" by preparing questions and listening carefully to responses.

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. **Explain the Activity:** Tell students they'll have the chance to meet a community helper and ask questions.
 2. **Discuss Questions:** Ask the class what kinds of things they're curious about, guiding them to think about the helper's job, tools, daily tasks, or reasons they like helping others.
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Preparation (5-10 minutes)

1. **Brainstorm Questions Together:** As a class, brainstorm a few simple questions to ask the community helper (e.g. "What do you do every day?", "What is the best part of your job?", "How do you help people feel safe?").
 2. **Assign Roles:** Assign each student a role, such as Question Helper, Note-Taker, and Listeners.
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Classroom Interview with Community Helper (20 minutes)

1. **Arrange a Visit:** Invite a community helper to visit the classroom, in person or virtually (e.g. consider a School Resource Officer, or a firefighter, social worker, nurse, or sanitation worker).
 2. **Student Questions:** Encourage each "question helper" to ask one of the brainstormed questions.
 3. **Note-Taking and Observation:** Have the "note-takers" draw or write about what they learned while listening.
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Group Sharing and Reflection (10 minutes)

1. **Share Observations:** Each group shares what they learned or drew/wrote with the class.
2. **Reflection Prompt:** Ask students, "How does this helper make our community a better place?" to spark discussion.

Assessment:

- Participation in discussions and activities.
- Quality and creativity of drawing.
- Quality of interview questions and reflections.

Lesson 2: Our School Rules

Grade Level: K-5

Lesson Objective: Students will understand the purpose of school rules and relate them to the idea of establishing “justice” in the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution.

Focus Skills:

Engaging in Civil Discourse Students collaborate to create a “Classroom Constitution,” practicing communication, listening, and respectful negotiation to establish shared agreements.

Analyzing Civic Engagement Students reflect on how following rules contributes to a positive learning environment and fairness, examining their role in upholding shared practices and values.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Simplified version of the Preamble
 - “Why We Have Rules” text (provided)
 - Drawing paper and crayons/markers
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Lesson Outline

Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Discussion Prompt:** “What are rules and why do we have them?”
- **Engage:** Encourage students to share examples of school rules and discuss how they keep everyone safe and promote respect.

Reading Time (10 minutes)

- Read the story *Why We Have Rules* aloud.

“Why We Have Rules”

“In our school, we have rules that help us all stay safe, learn, and work well together. Rules are like gentle reminders that tell us what’s okay and what isn’t. For example, when we raise our hand, we show respect to our classmates and teachers. Walking, instead of running, in the hallways helps keep us and our friends safe. And when we share things like toys, supplies, or even a seat with a friend, we learn kindness and the importance of helping one another. These school rules may seem small, but they make a big difference in helping everyone feel comfortable and ready to learn. Just like these rules, there are laws outside of school that help keep our neighborhoods and communities peaceful and fair!”

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. What is one school rule that helps everyone?
2. If you could add or change a rule, what would it be?

Constitution Connection (10 minutes)

- **Introduce the Constitution:**
 - Introduce the Constitution as a framework that helps us decide how to create and enforce fair rules and laws.
 - Discuss how the Constitution sets out principles like fairness, justice, and working together, which are important in creating rules for the country and the classroom.
 - Focus on **how rules are made** and the importance of everyone having a say in the process.
 - Show the simplified Preamble: **“We the People... establish justice...”**
- **Focus on “Establish justice”**
 - Discuss how justice means fairness and how school rules help create a fair environment.

Example: Resolving Conflicts Fairly

- *Scenario:* "If two students both want to sit in the same spot, our rule is to take turns or use 'rock, paper, scissors' to decide fairly."
- *Connection to the Preamble:* This rule reflects the idea of **establishing justice** by ensuring fairness in decision-making. It helps resolve disagreements peacefully so everyone feels respected and included.

Example: Keeping the Classroom Quiet During Work Time

- *Scenario:* "We have a rule that says everyone must work quietly during independent reading or writing time."
- *Connection to the Preamble:* This supports the idea of **ensuring domestic tranquility** by creating a calm and peaceful environment where everyone can focus. It shows how following rules helps maintain harmony for the group.

ACTIVITY: Creating a “Classroom Framework for Rules” (15 minutes)

Tell students that just like the people who created our country’s Constitution, they will create a classroom framework for how the class will decide on and agree to rules:

- **Step 1:** Discuss as a class how new rules should be made. Should everyone get to share ideas? Should the class vote?
- **Step 2:** Create a short “Classroom Framework for Rules” that outlines how the class will decide on, enforce, and update rules.
- **Step 3:** Use this process to brainstorm and vote on initial classroom rules, documenting them as the “Classroom Constitution.”
 - **Younger Students (K-1):** Focus on visual aids and simpler language about fairness.
 - **Older Students (4-5):** Discuss concepts like majority votes, fairness for everyone, and responsibility.
- **Final Step:** Students can draw a picture of one classroom rule in action.

Closing and Reflection (5 minutes)

- **Reflection Prompt:** Why is it important to have a fair process for making rules?
 - Encourage students to share how they felt about having a say in creating the rules.
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Extensions

Over the week, celebrate students who follow the “Classroom Constitution” with small acknowledgments or “good citizen” stickers to reinforce positive behavior and adherence to classroom rules.

Examples of small acknowledgements:

1. “I noticed [Student’s Name] was really kind by sharing their supplies today. Great job following our Classroom Constitution!”
2. At the end of the day, announce a few “Good Citizens of the Day” and share what they did to earn it.

Suggested Booklist: Our School Rules

- We Share This School by Dan Saks
- We Are a Class by Rob Sanders
- The Noisy Classroom by Angela Shante

Lesson 3: Voting in the Classroom

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn about voting as a democratic process and practice decision-making by participating in a class vote, and understand the role of majority rule in group decisions.

Focus Skills

Understanding the Lawmaking Process Students connect voting to real-world decision-making, understanding how democratic processes like elections and legislation rely on collective input to implement rules and policies.

Analyzing Civic Engagement Encourage students to recognize how their individual choices contribute to group decisions, even when the majority's choice differs from their own.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Printed copies of the story "*Why We Vote*" (text provided below)
 - [U.S. Constitution](#) and resources from PBSLM
 - Ballots for a classroom vote
 - Ballot box (decorate any cardboard box at disposal)
 - "I Voted" stickers or badges (Option for younger students: ["I Voted" printable sheet](#))
 - Printer sticker labels 3" size (round or oval shaped)
 - Coloring pencils
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Lesson Outline

Introduction (5 Minutes)

- **Discussion Prompt:** Ask students, "What is voting, and why do we vote?"
- Write student responses on the board.
- Guide them to understand that voting is a fair and inclusive way to make decisions together.

Reading Time (10 Minutes)

- Read *Why We Vote*

"Why We Vote"

Voting is one way people make decisions together. In our country, adults vote to choose leaders and make decisions about laws. When adults vote, it's like giving their opinion on what they think is best for everyone. Voting is fair because everyone gets a say. No matter where they live or who they are, every adult gets to have a say. In our classroom, we can vote on things, too! We can vote on what game to play, what book to read, or even where to sit. When we vote, we show that everyone's ideas are

important. Sometimes, we may not get exactly what we wanted, but we know that everyone got a chance to share their choice. Voting helps us work together to choose what most people want! When we vote, we're learning to respect each other's opinions and come together as a group.

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think voting is important?
2. What kinds of things might we vote on in our classroom?
3. How can we respect the outcome of a vote, even if it's not what we wanted?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the [Constitution](#)** and its role in giving citizens the right to vote.
 - Introduce the Constitution and its role in giving citizens the right to vote.
 - Discuss the phrase “We the People” and how it emphasizes teamwork and fairness.
 - **“We the People”** means everyone in our country is important and has a say. It reminds us that decisions are made together by all the people, not just one person or group. It shows that we work as a team to make our country fair and good for everyone.
 - Ask:
 - “Why is it important for everyone to have a say?”
 - “Can you think of a time when you participated in a group decision?”

ACTIVITY: Class Vote (15 Minutes)

1. **Explain the process:** Students will practice voting on a classroom topic (e.g., a book to read, a game to play).
2. **Vote:** Give each student a ballot to mark their choice. Collect them in the ballot box. Note that they should not share their vote, as it is a personal choice.
3. **Count Votes:** Tally the votes as a class and announce the winning choice.
4. **Discuss Majority Rule:** What happens if your choice doesn't win? How can we move forward together even if we disagree?

Explain to students: *“When people vote, they wear an ‘I Voted’ sticker to show they participated in making important decisions. It’s a way of saying, ‘I used my voice to help choose what’s best for everyone!’ It also reminds others that voting is an important part of being a good citizen. Today, your sticker shows that you helped make a decision for our class—just like adults do for our country!”*

Design Your Own Sticker (15-20 Minutes)

- Provide students with blank sticker templates.
- Encourage designs that reflect:
 - Voting and fairness.
 - Personal interests (e.g., stars, hearts, favorite items).
 - Creative phrases like “My Voice Counts” or “Classroom Voter!”
 - Colors and patterns to make their sticker vibrant and unique.



*EMILY LEGG, 12th GRADE,
Winner of Ohio's "I Voted Sticker Design Contest"
TEAYS VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL,
PICKAWAY COUNTY*



*HUDSON ROWAN, 8th GRADE
Winner of "I Voted Sticker Design
Contest"
ULSTER COUNTY, NY*

Closing and Reflection (5 Minutes)

- Review the importance of voting and how it ensures everyone has a say.
 - Connect the activity to real-world voting as a way for "We the People" to make decisions together.
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Extension for Older Students

After designing their stickers, encourage students to write a short reflection (in their journals or on the back of their ballots) about why voting is important and how it impacts their community.

Examples of prompts:

- "Why is voting important in a community or country?"
- "What would happen if no one voted?"

Suggested Booklist: Voting in the Classroom

- V is for Voting by Kate Farrell
- Vote for Our Future by Margaret McNamara
- I Voted: Making a Choice Makes a Difference by Mark Shulman
- Ida B. Wells Marches for the Vote by Dinah Johnson



I Voted!

On Election Day, in many communities, voters receive a sticker, a badge, or a button after they cast their ballot. This token both recognizes participation and encourages others to vote.

Color and cut out these "I Voted Today!" badges. Share them with members of your family after they cast their ballot. You can help celebrate and recognize their participation in the election.



Find more
games and activities
at pbskidsforparents.org

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Place a "X" in the box to choose the option you like the most
CHOOSE ONE.

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Place a "X" in the box to choose the option you like the most
CHOOSE ONE.

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Place a "X" in the box to choose the option you like the most
CHOOSE ONE.

OFFICIAL BALLOT

Place a "X" in the box to choose the option you like the most
CHOOSE ONE.

FULL SHEET BALLOT TEMPLATE

OFFICIAL BALLOT

**Place a "X" in the box to choose
the option you like the most
CHOOSE ONE.**

Lesson Extension: "Campaign for Your Vote" - Classroom Campaign Activity

Overview

This learning extension activity allows students to engage creatively in the voting process by designing campaign posters for a fun classroom vote. Students will learn how to express their ideas and persuade their classmates on a chosen topic while reinforcing the concept of voting and decision-making.

Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Explain the Activity:** Tell students that they will participate in a campaign to promote their ideas for a fun classroom vote. This could be for themes like a class party, a fun class activity, or a new class mascot.
 - **Discuss the Purpose of Campaigning:** Introduce the idea of campaigning and how it helps people share their opinions and persuade others. Ask students why they think campaigns are important.
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Choosing a Topic (5 minutes)

- **Brainstorm Ideas:** Facilitate a discussion where students can suggest ideas for what they would like to vote on. Write their suggestions on the board.
 - **Select a Final Topic:** As a class, choose one topic for the campaign activity. Make sure it's something that excites students and is relevant to their experiences.
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Poster Creation (20 minutes)

- **Explain Poster Requirements:** Instruct students to create a campaign poster that promotes their chosen option. Explain that their posters should include:
 - **A clear title** that states what they are campaigning for (e.g., "Vote for Pizza!" or "Let's Choose a Dolphin as Our Mascot!")
 - **Drawings or illustrations** that visually represent their idea.
 - **Persuasive slogans or phrases** that encourage classmates to support their option (e.g., "Pizza is the Best Snack!" or "Dolphins are Friendly and Fun!").
 - **Provide Materials:** Distribute art supplies such as colored paper, markers, crayons, and other crafting materials for students to create their posters. Encourage them to be creative and colorful in their designs.
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Campaign Presentation (10 minutes)

- **Presenting Posters:** Once posters are completed, allow each student or small group to present their poster to the class. They should explain their idea and why their classmates should vote for their idea.

- **Encourage Questions:** After each presentation, allow a few minutes for classmates to ask questions about the poster and the idea being promoted.
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Voting Process (10 minutes)

- **Conduct the Vote:** After all presentations, set up a voting station where students can cast their votes for the option they prefer. Use simple ballots with the choices listed, allowing students to vote in secret.
 - **Count the Votes:** Once everyone has voted, count the votes together and announce the winning choice to the class.
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Group Sharing and Reflection (5 minutes)

- **Discuss the Experience:** Facilitate a class discussion about the activity. Ask students:
 - “What did you enjoy about making the posters?”
 - “How did it feel to share your idea with the class?”
 - “Why is it important to respect the outcome of the vote?”
 - **Reflect on the Voting Process:** Discuss how the activity connects to real-world voting and decision-making.
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Assessment

- **Participation in the Activity:** Observe student engagement during the poster creation and presentations.
- **Creativity and Effort in Posters:** Assess the creativity and effort put into their campaign posters, including the clarity of their message and illustrations.
- **Understanding of Campaigning and Voting:** Evaluate their ability to explain the importance of campaigning and voting during the discussion,

Lesson 4: Being a Good Neighbor

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will explore the concept of being a good neighbor by learning about kindness, respect, and cooperation, and connecting these values to the Constitution.

Focus Skills:

Engaging in Civil Discourse Students discuss and reflect on kindness and cooperation, practicing respectful communication and learning to value diverse perspectives in their community.

Assessing American Democracy Through the connection to "promoting the general welfare" in the Constitution, students assess how the ideals of democracy are rooted in building strong, supportive communities. They learn how being a good neighbor upholds democratic values like inclusion, respect, and collective responsibility.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Printed copies of the story "*A Good Neighbor*" (text provided below)
 - Simplified explanation of "*promoting the general welfare*" from the Constitution
 - Blank templates for "Good Neighbor" certificates
 - Art supplies
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Lesson Outline

Introduction (5 minutes)

Discussion Prompt: "What is a neighbor?"

- Encourage responses about people who live nearby or those encountered daily (e.g., classmates, community members).

Follow-Up: "What do you think makes someone a good neighbor?"

- List responses on the board, focusing on ideas like kindness, respect, helpfulness, listening, and working together.

Reading Time (10 minutes)

- Read *A Good Neighbor*. Emphasize themes of kindness, sharing, and inclusion.

"A Good Neighbor"

Being a good neighbor means being friendly and kind to the people around us. Good neighbors help each other, share, and listen. Good neighbors know that sharing is important! They share things like

toys, books, and even snacks. When we share, we show others that we care and want to make them happy. For example, if a neighbor has a fun game, they might invite you over to play. Or if you have extra cookies, you can share them with your neighbors. Sharing creates a sense of community and makes everyone feel included. Everyone can be a good neighbor, no matter how old they are. Whether you're a child or an adult, you have the power to make a positive difference in your community. Small acts of kindness can inspire others to do the same, creating a chain reaction of goodness!

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is it important to be a good neighbor?
2. Can you share a time when someone was a good neighbor to you?

Constitution Connection (10 minutes)

- **Focus on "Promoting the General Welfare":**

- Explain that this phrase means taking care of each other and working together to make our community better.
- Ask: "How do kindness and cooperation help our community?," and "How can we promote the general welfare in our classroom?"

Activity: Good Neighbor Certificate (15 minutes)

Distribute blank certificate templates and art supplies.

For Younger Students:

- Encourage them to focus on drawing pictures that show their honoree being a good neighbor (e.g., sharing, helping, or showing kindness).
- Teachers or helpers can assist in writing a sentence based on what the student describes.

For Older Students:

- Ask them to design certificates with a short paragraph (3–5 sentences) explaining why their honoree exemplifies being a good neighbor.
- Example: "I am giving this certificate to Sam because he always helps me with math problems and includes me in games during recess. He shows kindness and makes our class better for everyone."

Sharing and Reflection (5 minutes)

- Invite students to present their certificates.
 - Younger students can show their pictures and say a sentence about their honoree.
 - Older students can read their paragraphs aloud.
- Discuss:
 - "What did you enjoy about creating the certificates?"
 - "How can we practice being good neighbors in our school and community?"

Assessment:

- Observe participation during discussions and certificate creation.
- Evaluate the thoughtfulness and effort in the certificates.

Suggested Booklist: Being a Good Neighbor

- **When We Are Kind** by Monique Gray Smith
- **Just Help!: How to Build a Better World** by Sonia Sotomayor
- **All Are Neighbors** by Alexandra Penfold

Lesson Extension: “Good Neighbor Week”

Overview

Extend the lesson by hosting a “Good Neighbor Week” in the classroom. Each day, students can be encouraged to perform acts of kindness or helpfulness to their peers, staff, and people at home. At the end of the week, they can share their experiences and how their actions helped the community.

Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Explain the Activity:** Introduce the concept of "Good Neighbor Week." Explain that students will engage in daily acts of kindness and helpfulness, focusing on making their classroom and community a better place.
 - **Discuss the Importance of Kindness:** Facilitate a brief discussion on why being a good neighbor and helping others is important. Ask students how small actions can make a big difference.
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Planning Acts of Kindness (10 minutes)

- Have students brainstorm different acts of kindness they can perform throughout the week. Write their ideas on the board. Encourage suggestions that are simple yet impactful, such as:
 - Helping a classmate with their homework
 - Writing thank you notes to staff members
 - Assisting with classroom chores
 - Doing a chore at home without being asked
 - As a class, decide on specific themes or focuses for each day of the week (e.g., "Thank You Thursday" for expressing gratitude).
-

Daily Kindness Activities (Ongoing)

Introduction to the Kindness Chain (5 Minutes)

- **Explain the Idea:** Tell students they’ll create a “Kindness Chain” to show how their acts of kindness add up to something big. Each act of kindness will be represented by a colorful paper link.
- **Make the Connection:** Compare the chain to a community, where every person’s kind action helps strengthen the bonds between people.

Preparing the Kindness Chain Materials

- Provide pre-cut strips of colorful paper (1 inch x 6 inches works well) and markers or crayons.

- Set up a dedicated space in the classroom where the chain will grow throughout the week (e.g., a bulletin board or a corner wall).
-

Daily Kindness Activities + Chain Building (10 Minutes/Day)

1. **Perform Acts of Kindness:** Encourage students to complete their planned acts of kindness each day.
 2. **Document the Kindness:** At the end of the day, students write or draw a brief description of their kind act on a paper strip.
 - Example: "I helped a friend pick up their dropped crayons" or "I said thank you to the lunch staff."
 3. **Add to the Chain:** As a class, staple or tape each strip to form a growing chain.
-

End-of-Week Celebration (15-20 Minutes)

1. **Showcase the Kindness Chain:** Display the completed chain to demonstrate the collective impact of the students' actions. Discuss how long the chain grew and what it represents.
 2. **Reflection Activity:** Facilitate a discussion where students share their favorite acts of kindness and how those actions made them feel.
 - Prompt: "What did you learn about being a good neighbor this week?"
 3. **Creative Wrap-Up:** Have students decorate a "Good Neighbor Week" certificate or create a class poster with the theme *"Our Acts of Kindness Make Us Stronger Together!"*
-

Group Discussion and Reflection (10 minutes)

- Facilitate a class discussion on the importance of community and helping others. Ask students:
 - "How did your actions create a positive impact?"
 - "What did you learn about kindness this week?"
 - "How can we continue to be good neighbors in the future?"
 - **Reflection on Kindness:** Discuss how these acts contribute to building a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.
-

Assessment

- **Participation in Activities:** Observe student engagement during the daily kindness activities and sharing sessions.
- **Reflection Journal:** Review the reflection journals for insights on students' understanding of kindness and its impact.
- **Class Discussion Contributions:** Assess students' contributions to the class discussions regarding their experiences and the importance of being a good neighbor.

Good Neighbor Award

for



Lesson 5: The Power of Sharing

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will explore the importance of sharing as a way to build relationships and strengthen communities, connecting to the Constitution's principles.

Focus Skills:

Identifying and Applying Civic Knowledge Students explore the idea of "We the People" in the Preamble to the Constitution, and how the principles of the Constitution encourage shared responsibility and collaboration. This helps them connect their own actions of sharing to broader civic ideals.

Engaging in Civil Discourse As students discuss the importance of sharing and its impact on communities, they practice respectful communication by listening to others' perspectives and engaging in thoughtful conversations about how sharing strengthens relationships and fosters community growth.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Text: *Why Sharing Matters*
 - Simplified text of the Preamble to the Constitution
 - Art supplies for a collaborative mural
 - Tape
 - Paper leaves
 - Coloring supplies
 - "Sharing Tree" (a large sheet of butcher paper with a tree trunk and branches drawn on it)
-

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of sharing and how it fosters positive relationships.
 - Identify situations in which sharing can help solve problems or make others feel included.
 - Collaborate to create a visual representation of the power of sharing through the "Sharing Tree" mural.
-

Lesson Outline

Introduction (10 Minutes)

- Ask students, "What does it mean to share?" Encourage responses that go beyond material things (e.g., sharing time, ideas, and responsibilities). Write their answers on the board.

- Next ask, “How do you feel when someone shares with you?” and “How do you think others feel when you share with them?” Discuss how sharing can make people feel happy, included, and valued.

Reading Time (10 Minutes)

- Read *Why Sharing Matters* aloud.

"Why Sharing Matters"

“Sharing is when we let other people have or use resources. It can be a toy, a book, a snack, or even just our time. Sharing shows that we care about others and want to make them happy. When we share, it helps everyone feel included. For example, if you share your crayons with a friend, they can color with you and have fun, too.

Sharing also helps us make friends and learn to work together. Imagine if no one shared their ideas in a group project. It would be hard to finish anything!

In our country, people also share things like parks, schools, and libraries. These are called public spaces, and they belong to everyone. When we share, we’re showing kindness and helping our communities grow stronger.”

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think sharing is important?
2. Can you think of a time when someone shared with you? How did it make you feel?
3. What are some things we can share in our classroom?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

Introduce the Constitution:

Explain that the Constitution is a set of rules that helps everyone in our country live and work together. It talks about how we share responsibility for our communities.

Focus on "We the People":

Discuss how “We the People” in the Preamble means everyone works together to create a fair and happy place to live. Sharing is one way we can work together.

Ask Students:

1. Why is sharing responsibilities important in a community?
2. How does sharing help people feel included?
3. When is it difficult to share?
4. What are ways we can share in our classroom or community to make it better?

ACTIVITY: The Sharing Tree Mural (20 minutes)

Introduction: Explain that like a tree flourishes with more leaves and branches, the classroom also flourishes and grows stronger through sharing.

Student Participation

- Each student receives a paper leaf to write or draw an example of sharing. It could be a physical item, their time, or help they gave someone.
- Students decorate their leaves and attach them to the tree mural.
 - Afterward, one by one, students will come up to the “Sharing Tree” (a large sheet of butcher paper with a tree trunk and branches drawn on it) and tape their leaves to the branches.

Sharing and Reflection (5 minutes)

- Once all the leaves are attached, stand back and observe the completed tree.
- Ask students:
 - “How does our ‘Sharing Tree’ show the power of sharing in our classroom?”
 - “What would happen if no one shared? How would that affect our tree? What would it look like?”
- Discuss how just like the tree grew with each act of sharing, their classroom can grow into a supportive community when they continue to share with one another.
- Lead a short discussion on how they can continue to practice sharing throughout the school day and at home.
 - Ask: “What can you do tomorrow to help our tree grow even more?” to encourage ongoing acts of sharing.
 - Remind students that, just like the Constitution emphasizes working together as “We the People,” sharing helps us create a happy and fair community.

Assessment:

- Observe engagement during discussions and the mural activity. Evaluate creativity and thoughtfulness in the leaves.

Suggested Booklist: The Power of Sharing

- A Park Connects Us by Sarah Nelson
- We Move Together by Kelly Fritsch
- The Sharing Book by Dianne White

Lesson 6: Our Rights and Responsibilities

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn that rights come with responsibilities, exploring how the Constitution protects freedoms and how teamwork strengthens communities.

Focus Skills

Identifying and Applying Civic Knowledge Students will apply their understanding of the Constitution, specifically the Bill of Rights, to real life situations. They'll identify their own rights such as the right to express their opinions freely under the First Amendment, and the corresponding responsibilities, such as respecting others' perspectives and avoiding harmful language. This skill helps them connect civic concepts to their personal experiences.

Materials:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
 - Text: *Our Rights and Responsibilities*
 - Simplified Bill of Rights (kid-friendly version)
 - Art supplies for poster creation (poster paper, coloring supplies, optional: decorative pieces)
-

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define what rights and responsibilities are.
 - Identify examples of rights and responsibilities at school and in their community.
 - Understand the importance of balancing rights and responsibilities in maintaining fairness and cooperation.
-

Introduction (10 minutes):

1. Write "Rights" and "Responsibilities" on the board.
 - Class Brainstorm: Write student responses on the board, helping them understand:
 - A **right** is something everyone is legally allowed to do or have (e.g., the right to speak, learn, or play).
 - A **responsibility** is something we should do to respect others' rights and make our community better (e.g., cleaning up after ourselves, being kind).
 1. **Right:** To play at recess.
 2. **Responsibility:** To play safely and include others.
 3. **Right:** To learn in class.
 4. **Responsibility:** To listen to the teacher and respect classmates.

- Ask students to share examples from their own lives and reinforce how every right comes with a responsibility.

Reading Time (10 Minutes)

- Read *Our Rights and Responsibilities* aloud.

“Our Rights and Responsibilities”

In our country, we all have rights, which are like special rules that let everyone live happily and freely. For example, we have the right to speak, the right to learn, and the right to be treated fairly. But with these rights come responsibilities. A responsibility means we do our part to help others and take care of our community. If you have the right to learn, you also have the responsibility to listen and help your classmates learn. If you have the right to speak, you also have the responsibility to be kind with your words.

When we follow our responsibilities, we make sure everyone can enjoy their rights. Just like in our classroom, we all work together to make it a great place for everyone. When we share and work as a team, we respect each other’s rights and make the whole group stronger!

Discussion Questions:

1. What is one right you have in the classroom?
 2. What responsibility do you think goes with that right?
 3. Why is it important for everyone to respect each other’s rights?
-

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the Bill of Rights:**
 - Explain that the **Bill of Rights** is part of the Constitution and protects our freedoms.
 - Show a kid-friendly version of the Bill of Rights, focusing on simple examples like freedom of speech and the right to learn. (See below)

Activity: Rights and Responsibilities Poster (15 Minutes)

1. Explain the Activity:

- Students will work in small groups to create a “Rights and Responsibilities” poster for the classroom.
- Each group will choose one right (e.g., the right to play, learn, or speak) and illustrate how responsibilities help protect that right.

2. Poster Requirements:

- A title with the chosen right (e.g., “*The Right to Play*”).
- Drawings or illustrations showing examples of responsibilities that protect that right (e.g., listening, raising hands).
- A short slogan or sentence (e.g., “*When we share, everyone wins!*”).

3. Provide Materials:

- Distribute art supplies and encourage creativity. Students can use markers, crayons, and stickers to make their posters colorful and engaging.
-

Closing and Reflection (5 Minutes)

- Groups present their posters.
 - Discuss as a class:
 - How does balancing rights and responsibilities create fairness?
 - What can we do to respect each other's rights every day?
-

Assessment

- Observe participation and creativity in the posters.
- Assess understanding of rights and responsibilities during discussions.

Suggested Booklist: Our Rights and Responsibilities

- What Can a Citizen Do? By Dave Eggers
- What If Everybody Did That? by Ellen Javernick

Kid-Friendly Bill of Rights

You Can Speak and Share Ideas

- You can say what you think and share your ideas.

You Can Believe What You Want

- You can believe in any religion or none at all.

You Can Meet with Friends Peacefully

- You can get together with others to talk or share ideas.

Your Home is Your Safe Place

- No one can come into your home or take your things without a good reason.

You Get a Fair Chance

- If someone says you did something wrong, you have the right to tell your side and be treated fairly.

Your Things are Private

- No one can look at your stuff or take it unless they have a good reason.

You Can Ask for Help

- If something isn't fair, you can ask the leaders to fix it.

Rules are Fair for Everyone

- Everyone has to follow the same rules, and they should be fair for all.

Lesson 7: Making a Positive Change

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn how small actions can lead to big changes, connecting this to the Constitution's focus on the common good, and brainstorm ways to make a positive impact in their classroom, school, and community.

Focus Skills

Collaboration and Teamwork This skill emphasizes the importance of working with others toward a common goal, mirroring how communities work together to solve problems and create positive change. In this lesson, teamwork can be reinforced as students create their "Change Makers Wheel" and contribute ideas to make a collective impact.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
 - Markers or crayons
 - Pre-cut paper circles (or sticky notes)
 - A "Change Makers Wheel" – large circle divided into sections: Classroom, School, Home, Community.
 - Simplified Preamble text:
"We the People work together to make things fair, keep everyone safe, and help each other live happy lives."
-

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify what it means to make a positive change in their school or community.
 - Understand that even small actions can have a big impact.
 - Brainstorm areas in their school or community that they would like to improve.
-

Introduction (5 Minutes)

1. **Discussion Prompt:** "What would you like to see improved around you?"
 - Write student answers on the board.
 - Guide students to understand that small actions can create big, positive changes (e.g., being kind, helping a friend).
 - Define "positive change" as an action that makes something better, whether that's helping someone, making something safer, or solving a problem.

2. Example Brainstorm:

- What changes would they like to see in the classroom, school, or community (e.g., cleaner playground, kindness club, recycling initiative)?

Reading Time (15 Minutes)

- Read *Making a Difference* aloud.

"Making a Difference"

Once, there was a girl named Emma who loved her school and wanted to make it a happy place for everyone. Every day during recess, she noticed that some kids sat alone or seemed sad because they didn't have anyone to play with. Emma thought, What if I try to help?

The next day, Emma brought a ball to recess and asked one of the kids sitting alone if they wanted to join her in a game. At first, just a few kids joined her, but Emma kept inviting more and more people to play. Soon, the lonely kids were laughing, running, and having fun with everyone else.

Emma realized something important: making a positive change doesn't always mean doing something big or difficult. It can start with one small act of kindness, like asking someone to play or lending a helping hand.

Before long, Emma's little idea had made a big difference. Recess became a time when everyone felt included, and the playground was full of smiles. Emma showed that when we notice something that could be better and take action, we can help others and make our community stronger.

When we work together, just like Emma and her classmates, we can make amazing changes happen—for our school, our neighborhood, and even the world!

- **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did Emma's small action lead to a big change?
2. Can you think of a time when you helped someone or made something better?
3. How does working together help make a larger impact?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the Preamble to the Constitution:**

Read the simplified text:

"We the People of the United States work together to make things fair, keep everyone safe, and help each other live happy lives."

- **Discuss:** Explain how the Constitution encourages everyone to work together for the good of the whole community, just like Emma did in the story.
- **Ask:**
 - "What does it mean to work together for the common good?"
 - How does making a positive change help everyone?

ACTIVITY: Class Vote (15 minutes)

Objective: Students will brainstorm small ways they can make positive changes and share ideas with their classmates.

Materials:

- Large poster or whiteboard to draw/show the Change Maker Wheel
- Markers
- Small pre-cut paper circles (one for each student) or sticky notes (for younger students, provide larger circles)
- Tape
- "Change Makers Wheel" template and sample

1. Introduction (2 minutes):

Show the "Change Makers Wheel" and explain the four sections:

- *Classroom:* Helping classmates or keeping the room tidy.
- *School:* Being kind at lunch or helping on the playground.
- *Home:* Completing chores or cleaning up after yourself.
- *Community:* Picking up litter or helping neighbors.

2. Brainstorming (5 minutes):

- Give each student a paper circle.
- Have them write or draw one small way they can make a positive change in one of the four sections (classroom, school, home, community).
- Encourage creativity and provide examples if needed.

3. Wheel Building (5 minutes):

- Call students up to stick their circle onto the corresponding section of the "Change Makers Wheel."
- Read each idea aloud, celebrating their creativity.

4. Reflection (3 minutes):

- Review the ideas in each section of the wheel.
- Discuss how these small changes can make a big impact when everyone works together.

Closing and Reflection (5-10 minutes):

1. Ask the students, "Why is it important to take action to improve our school or community?"
2. Discuss how even small steps toward making positive changes can have a big impact when everyone works together.

Assessment

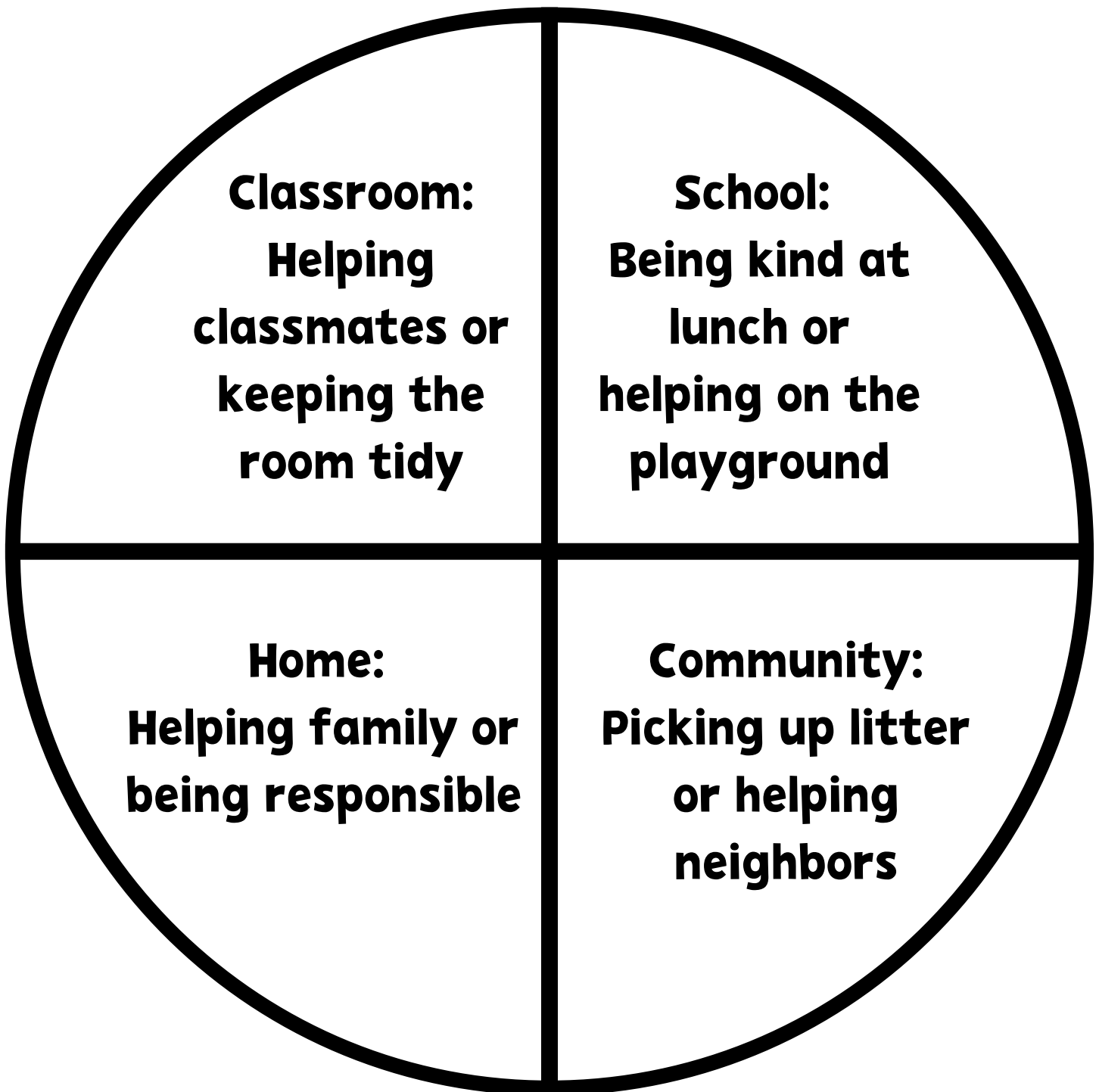
- **Participation in Brainstorming:** Did the student contribute an idea for making a positive change?
- **Group Collaboration:** Did the student actively participate in creating a plan with their group?

Suggested Booklist: Making a Positive Change

- I Walk with Vanessa by Kerascoet
- At Our Table by Patrick Hulse
- The Big Umbrella by Amy June Bates
- Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts
- Words to Make a Friend by Donna Jo Napoli
- Mindy Kim, Class President by Lyla Lee
- Harlem Grown: How One Big Idea Transformed a Neighborhood by Tony Hillery
- Our World Is A Family: Our Community Can Change the World by Miry Whitehill, Jennifer Jackson

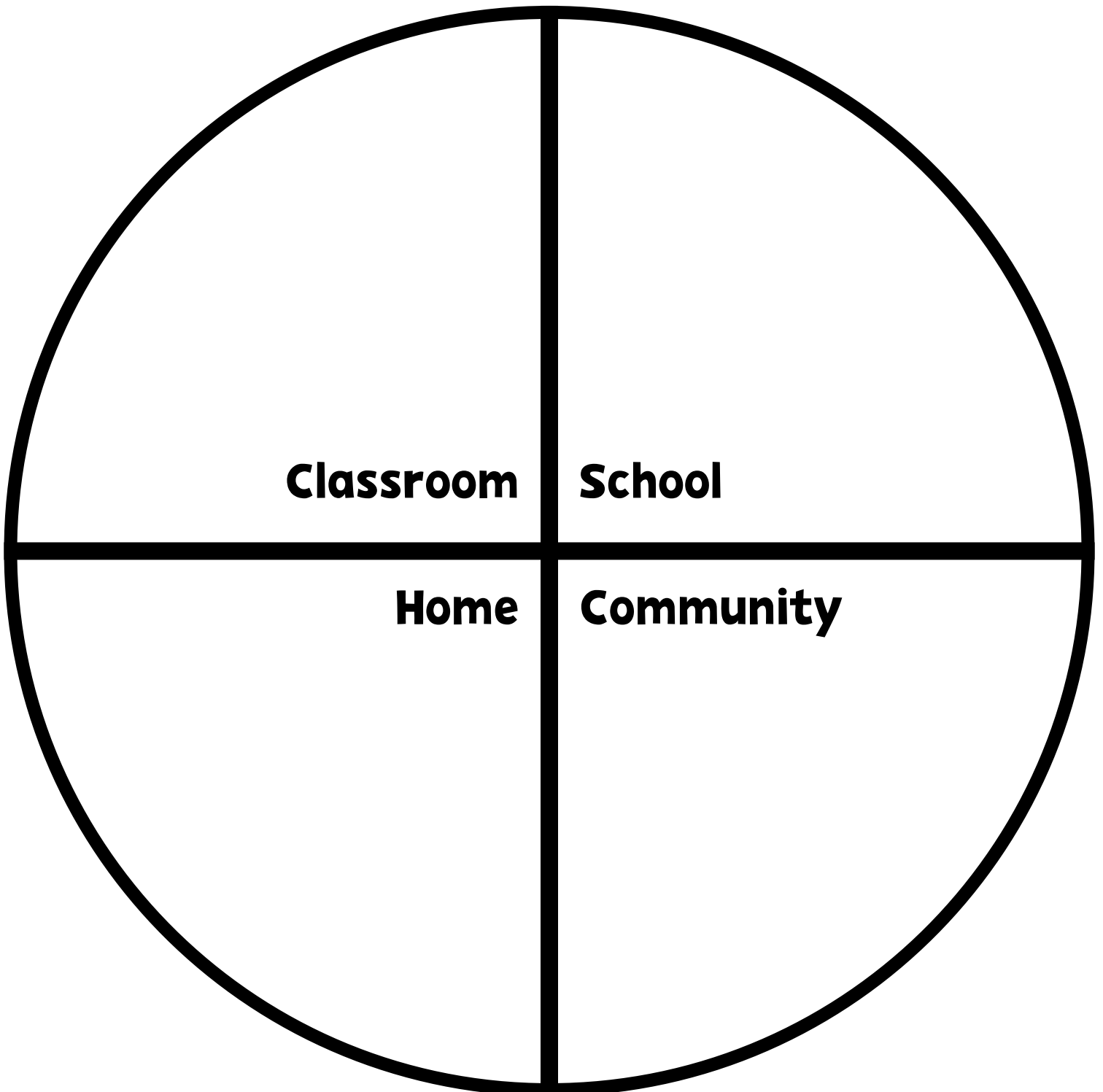
Change Makers Wheel

Example



Change Makers Wheel

Template



Lesson 8: Every Voice Matters

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn the importance of listening to others' ideas, connect this to the First Amendment, and use their voices to share ideas for positive change.

Focus Skills

Engaging in Civil Discourse Engaging in civil discourse involves understanding how to express ideas respectfully, even when opinions differ. By listening and sharing their own voices, students are learning the foundation of respectful conversation and debate, which is key to democracy.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard
 - Pre-cut paper leaves or shapes
 - Simplified First Amendment text:
"Everyone has the right to speak, share ideas, and be listened to."
 - Pre-cut paper leaves (enough for each student)
-

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the importance of listening to different voices and opinions.
 - Recognize how their voice can contribute to making their classroom or community better.
 - Reflect on how respecting diverse ideas builds fairness and understanding.
-

Introduction (5 Minutes)

1. **Discussion Prompt:** "Why is it important to listen to each other?"
 - Write student answers on the board.
 - Encourage them to think about how listening can lead to better ideas, solve problems, and help everyone feel included.
 2. Define "voice" as not just speaking words, but also sharing ideas, feelings, and needs.
 3. Ask: "How do you feel when someone actively listens to what you have to say?"
-

Reading Time (15 Minutes)

Read *The Power of a Voice* aloud.

"The Power of a Voice"

Ben was a boy who loved to build things. One day, his class was asked to create a new design for their school playground. Ben wanted to build a treehouse, but not everyone agreed. "It's too high!" said Mia. "We should build something on the ground." "I want swings!" added Sam. The class couldn't decide. Ben felt frustrated, but then he had an idea. "Let's listen to everyone's ideas and find a way to make them all work!" he said. The class worked together to plan a playground that included swings, a treehouse, and a slide. When it was finished, it was the best playground they'd ever seen. Ben learned that listening to every voice can help us find solutions that make everyone happy.

- **Discussion Questions:**

- Why was it important for Ben to listen to the ideas of others?
 - Can you think of a time when listening helped you work better with others?
 - How does including everyone's voice make things better for a group?
 - What does active listening look like? (Answers may include raising your hand to speak, not interrupting someone when they are sharing ideas, using silent signals like a thumbs-up to show support, or saying, "I'd like to add to that idea.")
 - What doesn't active listening look like? (Answers may include talking over someone, ignoring what they say, or interrupting before they finish sharing.)
-

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes)

- **Introduce the First Amendment:**

Simplified Text:

"The First Amendment says everyone has the right to speak, share ideas, and be listened to. It protects the freedom of speech and helps people work together to solve problems."

Discuss: The First Amendment protects everyone's right to share their voice. How does respecting others' ideas help us work together?

Just like listening and sharing ideas in person helps us work together to solve problems, there are other ways to use your voice to inspire change. Sometimes, people express their ideas in writing, art, or other creative ways to make their message heard.

Let's explore how we can use our voices in a powerful, visual way to create positive change.

Activity: "Voice of Change" Billboard Design (15 Minutes)

Objective: Students will express how their voices can create positive change by designing a "billboard" that represents an issue or idea they want to improve in their school or community.

Materials Needed:

- Large white poster paper or cardboard
- Markers, crayons, and colored pencils

- Magazines (optional for cut-out images)
-

Instructions:

1. Introduction (2 Minutes):

- Explain that just like advertisements or public service announcements use billboards to share important messages, students will create their own billboards to share a message about how they can use their voice to make a positive change.
- Briefly discuss examples of positive changes they could focus on, like kindness, respect, helping the environment, and resolving conflicts.

2. Billboard Creation (8 Minutes):

- Give each student a piece of poster paper.
- Ask them to think of one small way they can use their voice to make a positive change. This could be something like:
 - “Be kind to others.”
 - “Pick up litter to keep our school clean.”
 - “Stand up for others when they’re being bullied.”
- Have students draw and decorate their billboard with bold text and images that represent their message.
 - For example, a student who chose “Pick up litter” might draw a trash can with a smiling face or a clean park.
- If available, students can cut out pictures from magazines or use other materials to enhance their design.

3. Gallery Walk (5 Minutes):

- Once the students finish their billboards, set them up around the classroom or along the walls.
- Have a "gallery walk" where students walk around the room to view each other's designs.
- Ask them to think about how each message could help make a positive change.

4. Class Reflection (3 Minutes):

- Ask students:
 - “What message did you want to convey with your billboard?”
 - “How can your message make a difference in our community?”
 - “What did you like about the billboards your classmates made?”

Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes)

- Discuss how sharing and listening helps create fairness and understanding.
 - Challenge students: “This week, try to use your voice to make a positive difference or show respect by listening to someone else’s ideas.”
-

Peer Assessment: Students give compliments or feedback during the gallery walk, practicing active listening and responding skills.

Self-Assessment: Provide checklists for students to reflect on their participation:

- "Did I share my ideas?"
- "Did I listen to others?"
- "How did I feel during the activity?"

Suggested Booklist: Every Voice Matters

- Sofia Valdez, Future Prez by Andrea Beaty
- Sharice's Big Voice: A Native Kid Becomes a Congresswoman by Sharice Davids
- Say Something! by Peter H. Reynolds
- Something, Someday by Amanda Gorman
- Change Sings: A Children's Anthem by Amanda Gorman
- The Activist by Nikkolos Smith

Lesson 9: Our Local Government

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn about the structure and purpose of local government. They will explore the roles of local leaders and how they help their community.

Focus Skills:

Identifying and Applying Civic Knowledge Students will learn about the roles and responsibilities of local government and how they address community needs.

Analyzing Civic Engagement Students will understand how local leaders and citizens work together to solve problems in their community.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
 - Printed copies of “Our Local Government” (text provided below)
 - Simple text of the Constitution's Preamble
 - Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Government in Action"
 - Pre-cut paper shapes (squares for city council, circles for the mayor, stars for police officers, etc.)
 - Markers, crayons, and glue, construction paper
 - Stickers or magazine cut-outs for decoration (optional)
-

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the key roles in local government.
 - Understand how local government helps their community.
 - Express their understanding of local government through creative design.
-

Introduction (5 Minutes):

Discussion Prompt: “What do you think our local government does? How does it help the community?”

- Write student answers on the board. Guide them to recognize that local government helps make decisions about their city or town, such as keeping parks clean, making sure roads are safe to drive on, and organizing community events.
 - Ask, “Can you think of any rules or laws that help your school or neighborhood be safe and functional?”
-

Reading Time (15 Minutes):

Read *Understanding Local Government* aloud.

“Understanding Local Government”

Local government is made up of people who help make decisions that affect your community, like your town or city. These leaders work together to make sure things run smoothly and that everyone has what they need to live in a safe, happy place.

*In every town or city, there are different people who have special jobs. For example, the **mayor** is like the leader of the whole town. They help make big decisions, like fixing the roads, planning events, and making sure everyone in the community is treated fairly. The mayor doesn't make decisions alone. They work with the **city council**, a group of people who help decide on laws and rules for the community.*

*Other important leaders in the local government include **police officers** who help keep everyone safe, **firefighters** who respond to emergencies, and **school board members** who make sure schools have everything they need to teach students well.*

How do these people get their jobs? Many local leaders, like the mayor and city council members, are chosen through elections. That means people in the community vote to decide who will represent them. Voting is an important way to have a say in how the community is run. By choosing leaders who listen to their ideas and concerns, citizens help shape the future of their town or city.

Each person has a special role in making the community a good place for everyone. Local government is important because it helps solve problems and make decisions that keep everyone happy, healthy, and safe. By working together, local leaders make sure the community is a great place to live!

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think it's important for there to be different leaders in the community?
- How do you think the mayor or council members make decisions?
- Can you think of a local leader who helps make your community better?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes):

Introduce the Preamble to the Constitution (Simplified Text):

We the People of the United States work together to make things fair, keep everyone safe, and help each other live happy lives.

Discuss:

- Explain that while the Constitution sets the foundation for the entire country, local governments have their own rules to make sure things run smoothly at the community level.
- Ask, “How do local governments help us live happy and safe lives, just like the Preamble says?”
- Talk about the roles of local government: mayor, town council, public health workers, school board, etc.

Questions to Ask:

- What do you think is the most important part of the local government?
 - How do local leaders make sure people's voices are heard in the community?
-

Activity: "Government in Action" (15 Minutes)

Objective: Students will create a visual representation of local government roles and how these leaders help their community.

Materials Needed:

- Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Government in Action"
 - Pre-cut paper shapes (circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, and stars)
 - List of Roles and Definitions
 - Markers, crayons, tape, and glue
 - Stickers or magazine cut-outs for decoration (optional)
-

Suggested Shapes and Categories:

1. Safety & Emergency Services (Circle)

- **Firefighter** – Works to put out fires, respond to emergencies, and keep everyone safe.
- **EMT (Emergency Medical Technician)** – Provides care and assistance during emergencies.
- **Judge** – Ensures laws are fair and helps solve community problems.
- **Police Officer** – Helps keep the community safe by enforcing rules and protecting people.

2. Community Leaders & Decision Makers (Square)

- **Mayor** – Leads the local government, makes decisions, and represents the community.
- **City Council Member** – Helps make rules and decide on budgets to improve the community.
- **School Board Member** – Oversees school policies and decisions about student learning.
- **Treasurer** – Manages public funds and budgets to keep things running smoothly.
- **Local Business Owner** – Starts businesses that provide jobs and contribute to the community.
- **Community Leader** – Supports and advocates for the well-being of the community.

3. Public Services & Utilities (Rectangle)

- **Garbage Collector** – Keeps the community clean and healthy by collecting trash.
- **Utility Worker** – Maintains essential services like water, electricity, and sewage systems.
- **Environmental Advocate** – Protects natural resources and promotes sustainability.
- **Public Health Official** – Helps create rules to keep the community safe and healthy, especially during emergencies.
- **Transportation Official** – Oversees roads, buses, and other ways to get around safely.

4. Education & Libraries (Triangle)

- **Teacher** – Educates students, shapes the future, and supports the whole community.
- **Librarian** – Provides access to books, resources, and information for learning.
- **Doctor/Nurse** – Takes care of people when they're sick and helps keep the community healthy.

5. Recreation & Wellness (Star)

- **Director of Parks & Recreation** – Maintains parks and organizes activities for people to enjoy.
 - **Social Worker** – Supports families and individuals by providing resources and guidance.
-

Instructions:

Introduction (2 Minutes)

- Briefly explain the activity: each student will represent a role in local government.
- Show the pre-cut shapes and discuss the categories.

Creative Design (10 Minutes)

- Give each student a shape based on the category they are assigned.
- Ask students to draw or write about their role and how it helps the community.
- Examples:
 - **Mayor** shape → Draw a town hall and write: "Mayor – Makes important decisions about the community."
 - **Firefighter** shape → Draw a fire truck and write: "Firefighter – Responds to emergencies and keeps our community safe."
- Students can decorate their shapes with markers, crayons, stickers, or magazine cut-outs if desired.

Assembly (3 Minutes)

- Have students take turns placing their shapes on the "Government in Action" board.
 - As each student places their shape, they briefly explain the role they represent.
-

Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes):

- Ask students:
 - "What did you learn about local government today?"
 - "How do you think local leaders help make your community better?"
 - Conclude by discussing how all of the roles work together to create a fair, safe, and happy community.
 - Challenge students to think about how they can be leaders in their own community, even at school or at home.
-

Assessment:

- **Participation in Discussion:** Did the student engage with the questions and explain the role of local government?
- **Contribution to the “Government in Action” Board:** Did the student create a clear and thoughtful representation of a local government role?
- **Reflection:** Did the student connect the activity to the real world concept of local government and understand its importance?

Suggested Booklist: Learning About Local Government

- For Which We Stand: How Our Government Works and Why It Matters by Jeff Foster
- Local Governments by Connor Stratton
- Grace for President by Kelly DiPucchio
- The President of the Jungle by Andrew Rodrigues, Larissa Ribeiro, Paula Desgualdo, Pedro Markun

Roles and Definitions:

1. **Mayor** – Leads the local government, makes important decisions, and represents the community
2. **City Council Member** – Helps make rules and decide on things like budgets to improve the community.
3. **Police Officer** – Helps keep the community safe by enforcing rules and protecting people.
4. **Firefighter** – Works to put out fires, helps in emergencies, and keeps everyone safe.
5. **Teacher** – Teaches students, helps them learn, and supports the whole community.
6. **Doctor/Nurse** – Takes care of people when they're sick and helps keep the community healthy.
7. **Garbage Collector** – Picks up trash to keep the community clean and healthy.
8. **Librarian** – Helps people find books and information to learn and grow.
9. **Treasurer** – Manages the community's money to make sure things run smoothly.
10. **Judge** – Makes sure rules are fair and helps solve problems.
11. **Local Business Owner** – Starts businesses that provide jobs and help the community grow.
12. **Community Leader** – Works to support others and make the community a better place.
13. **Social Worker** – Helps families and people get the support they need.
14. **School Board Member** – Helps make decisions about schools and how students learn.
15. **Environmental Advocate** – Works to protect nature and make sure the environment stays healthy.
16. **Public Health Official** – Helps make rules to keep the community safe & healthy, especially in emergencies.
17. **Utility Worker** – Takes care of important services like water, electricity, and garbage collection.
18. **Director of Parks & Recreation** – Helps keep parks and fun activities for people to enjoy.
19. **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)** – Provides help and care for people in emergencies.
20. **Transportation Official** – Helps keep roads, buses, and other ways to get around safe and running.

Lesson Extension: Civic Engagement Scavenger Hunt

Overview:

This out-of-school project invites students to explore local civic spaces and landmarks over time, encouraging them to become familiar with their community and its civic functions. The goal is for students to learn about the people, places, and organizations that help their community run smoothly and serve its members. As students visit these places, they will engage with the environment by drawing, writing, or taking photos of their experiences, reflecting on how these spaces contribute to civic life.

Introduction:

Explain to students and families that they will be on a journey to explore places that help make their community fun and safe. Over several weeks, students can visit one or more of the locations listed below, where they will complete a creative task based on what they see, hear, and learn.

Discussion Points for Families and Students:

- What does it mean to be a good citizen in your community?
 - What kinds of places help keep your neighborhood, town, or city safe and fun?
 - How do people in our community work together to make our lives better?
-

Materials Needed:

- Civic Engagement Exploration Worksheet (with space for drawing, writing, and taking notes)
 - Pencils, crayons, or markers
 - A camera or smartphone (optional, if the student has access)
 - A notebook to collect reflections and notes from each visit
 - Family Letter template to send home with students
-

How It Works:

With their families, students will visit locations like City Hall, local libraries, fire stations, police stations, parks, and more, documenting their experiences by drawing, writing, or taking photos. After each visit, they will reflect on how these places help their community.

- **Task Examples:**
 - **Draw** a picture of the place or something you saw there (e.g., the building, a statue, or an event).
 - **Write** one thing you learned about how the place helps your community.
 - **Take a photo** of something that represents the work or mission of that location (with permission).
-

List of Possible Local Places to Visit:

1. City Hall / Town Hall

Task: Draw or write about what happens at City Hall or Town Hall. How do leaders like the mayor or city council help the community?

Example: “The mayor makes decisions to improve our city. They might help fix the roads or plan fun events.”

2. Local Library

Task: Write about how the library helps people in the community or draw a picture of your favorite book or part of the library.

Example: “Libraries give us books to read and help people learn new things.”

3. Fire Station

Task: Draw a firefighter or write about how firefighters help keep us safe.

Example: “Firefighters put out fires and help when there is an emergency.”

4. Police Station

Task: Write about how police officers protect the community or draw a police car.

Example: “Police officers make sure everyone is safe and follow the rules.”

5. Community Center

Task: Take a photo or draw about something that happens at the community center, like a sports game, a meeting, or an event.

Example: “The community center is where people come together to play games and have fun.”

6. Public Park

Task: Draw a picture of a park or write about how parks help the community by giving people a place to play.

Example: “Parks are fun because they have playgrounds, grass for picnics, and places to walk.”

7. Post Office

Task: Write about what happens at the post office or draw a picture of mailboxes or letters.

Example: “The post office is where we send and receive letters. It helps people stay connected.”

8. Museum or Historical Landmark

Task: Write about something interesting you learned at the museum or historical site or draw a picture of the artifact or statue.

Example: “This monument honors important people in our community’s history.”

9. Volunteer or Charity Organization

Task: Write about how volunteers help others or take a photo of something you saw that shows how the organization is helping.

Example: “Volunteers help clean up parks or donate food to families in need.”

10. School or Playground

Task: Draw a picture of something that helps make your school or playground a safe and fun place.

Example: “Our school helps us learn and our playground gives us a space to play with friends.”

11. Sanitation Department or Recycling Center

Task: Write about why it is important to keep our community clean or draw a picture of the recycling truck.

Example: “Sanitation workers help us by picking up trash and recycling so our city stays clean.”

12. Local Farm or Farmers Market

Task: Write about how a farm or market provides food for the community or draw something you saw there.

Example: “Farmers grow food that we eat. The market helps bring fresh food to people.”

Reflection and Sharing:

Once students have visited one or more of these places, encourage them to share what they’ve learned and created. Students can either present their drawings and writings to the class or share them in a classroom display or virtual gallery.

Possible reflection questions include:

- “Which place was your favorite to visit, and why?”
 - “What do you think is the most important place or person in your community?”
 - “How can you help make your community better, like the people in the places you visited?”
-

Assessment:

- **Participation:** Was the student able to visit the locations and complete the tasks?
- **Creativity:** Did the student create thoughtful drawings or reflections?
- **Engagement:** Did the student demonstrate understanding of the role each place plays in making the community a better place?

Civic Engagement Exploration Worksheet

Instructions:

Over the next few weeks, you will be exploring different places in your community. At each place you visit, use this worksheet to help you reflect on what you learned. You can draw, write, or take photos to show what you saw, how the place helps the community, and why it's important. Be creative and have fun as you explore!

Place You Visited:

Name of the place: _____

Date of visit: _____

Who did you visit/meet?: _____

What I Learned About This Place:

Write 1-2 sentences about what you learned. What does this place do for your community?

Creative Task:

Option 1: Draw a Picture

Draw something you saw at this place. It could be the building, something you found interesting, or something that shows what happens there.

Option 2: Write a Reflection

Write one or two sentences about why this place is important to your community. How does it help people or make the community better?

What is Something New You Learned?

What was the most interesting thing you learned about the people or work at this place?

Photo Task (Optional):

Take a photo of something that shows what happens at this place. You can also draw a picture of something you see.

- **Photo Description/Caption:**

Reflection Questions:

1. How do the people at this place help the community?

2. Why is this place important to your town or city?

3. What was your favorite part of visiting this place?

Extra Fun!

Bonus: If you visited a place with a sign, a logo, or a picture, draw it here!

Next Stop:

Where would you like to visit next in your community? Write the name of the place you'd like to learn more about:

Parent/Guardian Signature (optional):

Family Letter Template:

Dear Families,

We're excited to announce an interactive project for our students: the Civic Engagement Scavenger Hunt! This is a wonderful opportunity for your child to explore their local community, learn about civic roles, and engage with the places that help keep our town or city running smoothly. Over the next few weeks, students will be encouraged to visit key locations such as City Hall, libraries, parks, fire stations, and more, documenting their experiences through drawing, writing, and optional photos.

Please encourage your child to discuss what they learn about local government and community services. If they choose to take photos, please remind them to focus on objects, buildings, and events, not individuals, to respect privacy.

Thank you for supporting your child's exploration and learning. We can't wait to hear about their discoveries!

Best,

[Your Name]

[Your School]

Lesson 10: Our Civic Heroes

Grade Level: K-5

Objective: Students will learn about civic heroes and how individuals who stand up for justice, fairness, and equality contribute to making their communities better. They will explore examples of civic heroes and reflect on how they can be heroes in their own way.

Focus Skills:

Engaging in Civil Discourse Students will discuss and reflect on the qualities of civic heroes and how standing up for fairness and justice can lead to meaningful conversations and change.

Analyzing Civic Engagement Students will explore how individuals take action to improve their communities, inspiring them to think about their own potential for civic involvement.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper or whiteboard and markers
- Printed copies of “**Our Civic Heroes**” (story provided below)
- Pictures or short biographies of famous civic heroes (optional) from the school or public library (get suggestions from the children’s librarian on staff)
- Craft supplies (construction paper, markers, crayons, etc.)
- Pre-cut paper stars (one for each student)

Lesson Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify examples of civic heroes and their contributions to society.
 - Understand the importance of standing up for fairness, equality, and justice.
 - Reflect on how they can be “civic heroes” in their own communities.
-

Introduction (5 Minutes):

Discussion Prompt: “Who can be a hero? What makes someone an upstander?”

Explain that a **bystander** is someone who sees something unfair or harmful but stays silent and does nothing. An **upstander** is someone who speaks up or takes action to stand up for others, even when it may be difficult or unpopular.

- Write student answers on the board. Encourage them to think about real-life heroes—people who help others, make the world better, and stand up for what’s right.
- Ask: “Can a hero be someone in your community? What do you think makes them a hero?”

Reading Time (15 Minutes):

Text to Read Aloud: "Our Civic Heroes"

Civic heroes are people who work to make the world a better place by standing up for what is fair and just. They are ordinary people who do extraordinary things to help their communities. Sometimes, they work together with others to fight for what's right, and sometimes, they stand up alone when they see something that isn't fair.

*For example, **Rosa Parks** was a civic hero because she stood up for equality by refusing to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, even though the law said African Americans had to sit at the back. This brave act helped start the civil rights movement, which worked to end segregation and give everyone the same rights.*

*Another civic hero is **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**, who used peaceful protests to fight for equal rights for all people, regardless of the color of their skin. His speeches and actions inspired millions to work together for justice and fairness.*

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. are called heroes?
- Can you think of a time when you saw someone stand up for what is right?
- How can we be civic heroes in our own lives, even if we're young?

Constitution Connection (10 Minutes):

Introduction to the First Amendment (Simplified):

"The First Amendment is part of the Constitution, and it gives us the right to say what we think, to practice our religion, and to tell the government if we don't agree with something. It also says we can gather together with others to work on things we care about."

Discuss:

- How does the First Amendment help us be like civic heroes?
- Can you think of a time when someone used their voice to make something better or more fair?
- Why is it important to speak up when something is wrong?

Activity: "Design Your Own Civic Hero" (15 Minutes)

Objective: Students will create a visual representation of their own civic hero, using qualities and actions that they believe make someone a hero in their community.

Materials Needed:

- Large poster paper or chart paper labeled "Our Civic Heroes"
- Pre-cut paper stars (one for each student)
- Markers, crayons, and glue and other craft supplies

Instructions:

1. Introduction (2 Minutes): Explain that every student will have a chance to create their own civic hero. They will choose someone from their life or community who stands up for fairness, equality, and justice. This could be someone they know personally, like a teacher, a neighbor, or a family member, or a famous civic hero they admire.

- Consider laying out pre-selected books about civic heroes for students who may have difficulty coming up with someone as their civic hero.
- Discuss how civic heroes might stand up for things like kindness, fairness, or helping others.

Creative Design (10 Minutes):

- Give each student a pre-cut star shape.
- Ask them to draw or write about their civic hero. They should include:
 - The hero's name
 - A description of why they are a hero (What did they do? How did they help their community?).
 - What qualities make them a hero (bravery, kindness, fairness, etc.)?
- Students can decorate their stars with colorful markers, glitter, or stickers to make them stand out.

Assembly (3 Minutes):

- Once the stars are completed, have students take turns sharing their civic heroes with the class and gluing their stars onto the "Our Civic Heroes" board.
 - Ask each student to briefly explain why their hero is important and what makes them a civic hero.
-

Closing and Reflection (5-10 Minutes):

- Ask students:
 - What makes a civic hero different from a superhero?
 - Unlike superheroes with superhuman abilities, regular heroes rely on their compassion, determination, and willingness to make a difference in the world.
 - A civic hero is someone who focuses on improving their community, standing up for fairness, justice, and the common good. They may organize protests, help people in need, or stand up against unfair systems.
 - How can we be heroes in our own communities?
 - What small things can you do every day to be a civic hero?

Conclude by emphasizing that everyone can be a hero by helping others, standing up for fairness, and working to make their community better. Encourage students to think about ways they can be civic heroes in their own lives.

Assessment:

- **Participation in Discussion:** Did the student engage with the questions and explain their thoughts about civic heroes?

- **Contribution to the “Our Civic Heroes” Board:** Did the student create a thoughtful and creative representation of their hero?
- **Reflection:** Did the student connect the concept of civic heroes to real-life actions and express how they can be a hero in their community?

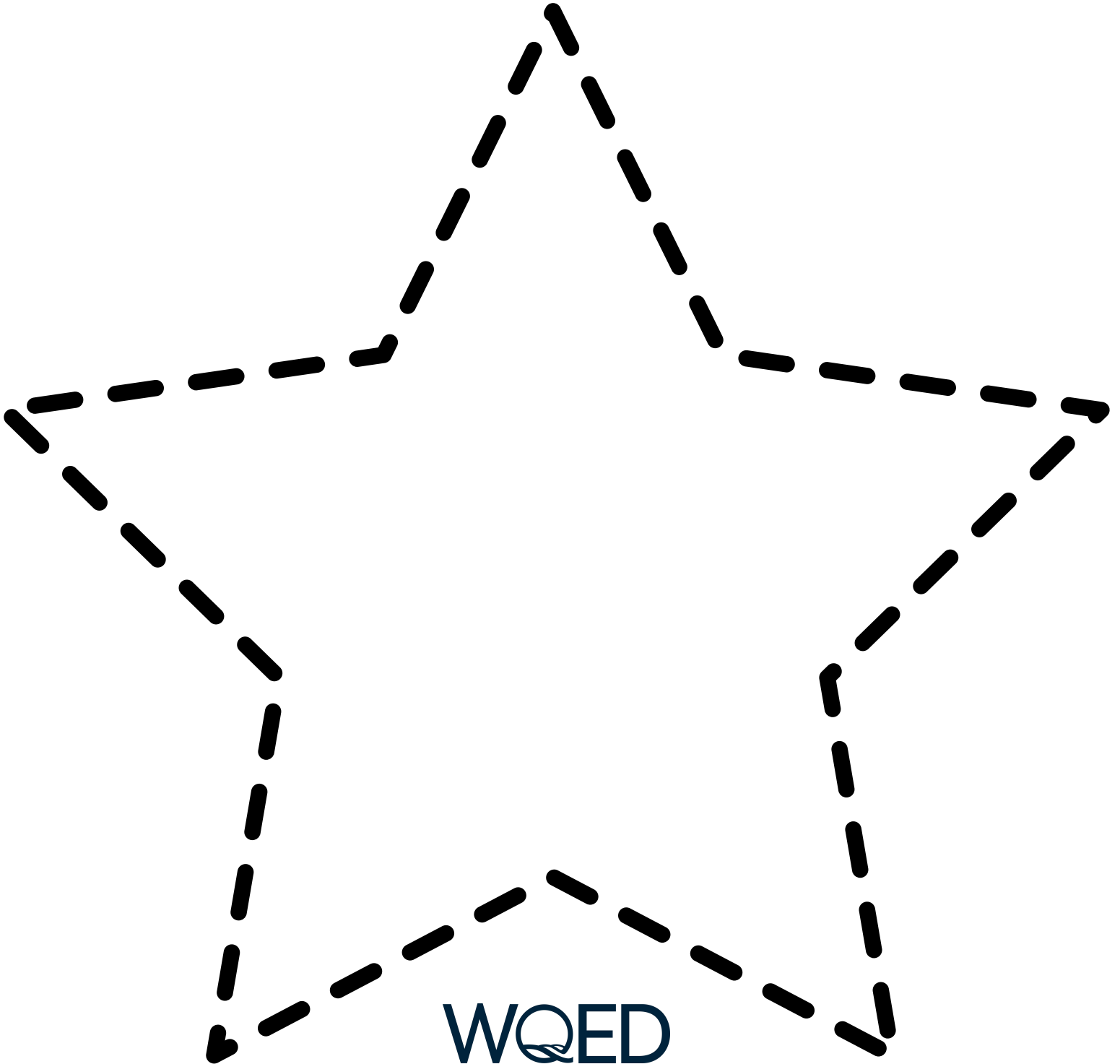
Suggested Booklist: Our Civic Heroes

- Unshakable Eleanor : How Our 32nd First Lady Used Her Voice to Fight for Human Rights by Michelle Markel
- Love Is Loud : How Diane Nash Led the Civil Rights Movement by Sandra Neil Wallace
- Someday is Now by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
- Fighting with Love : The Legacy of John Lewis by Lesa Cline-Ransome
- Martí’s Song for Freedom : Martí y sus versos por la libertad by Emma Otheguy
- Shirley Chisholm Is a Verb by Veronica Chambers
- Soldier for Equality by Duncan Tonatiuh
- Thank You, Helpers: Doctors, Nurses, Teachers, Grocery Workers, and More Who Care for Us by Patricia Hegarty
- Ordinary People Change The World series by Brad Meltzer
- Little People, BIG DREAMS series by Maria Isabel Sánchez Vegara

Civic Hero - Paper Star Template

Draw or write about your civic hero. Include

- **The hero's name.**
- **A description of why they are a hero (What did they do? How did they help their community?).**
- **What qualities make them a hero (bravery, kindness, fairness, etc.).**



Lesson Extension: "Civic Minded Citizens" - Interviewing Local Heroes

Overview:

This extension activity provides students with the opportunity to connect with local civic heroes who have worked to make the community a better place. Students will practice interview skills, listen actively, and reflect on how these heroes impact their lives.

Introduction (5 minutes):

Explain the Activity:

Tell students that they'll have the chance to meet a local civic hero, either in person or virtually, to learn more about their work and contributions. The goal is for students to ask thoughtful questions, listen closely, and gain a deeper understanding of how civic heroes make the world better.

- Ask the class, "What do you think makes someone a civic hero? What kinds of things do you think these people do to help others?" Encourage students to think about local figures such as community leaders, volunteers, activists, or people who have helped fight for equality, safety, or justice.
-

Preparation (5-10 minutes):

Brainstorm Questions Together:

As a class, brainstorm a few simple questions to ask a civic hero. Some possible questions could include:

- "What is your job, and how do you help others?"
- "What made you want to become a civic hero?"
- "What's one of the biggest challenges you face in helping the community?"
- "How do you know if you're making a difference?"
- "What advice do you have for someone who wants to help others like you do?"

Assign Roles:

- **Question Helpers** – students who will ask the questions.
 - **Note-Takers** – students who will draw or write down the hero's responses.
 - **Listeners** – students who will listen and observe the interaction.
-

Classroom Interview with Local Hero (20 minutes):

Arrange a Visit:

Invite a local civic hero to visit the classroom (either in person or virtually). This could be someone like a community activist, local government official, police officer, healthcare worker, or an educator. Be sure to give students a bit of background on the person beforehand.

Student Questions:

Encourage each "question helper" to ask one of the questions they brainstormed earlier. Students should also have follow-up questions based on what the hero shares.

Note-Taking and Observation:

While the interview is happening, have the “note-takers” draw pictures or write key points from the conversation. This could include a picture of the hero at work, a list of things they do to help, or key quotes from the interview.

Group Sharing and Reflection (10 minutes):**Share Observations:**

After the interview, give students a chance to share what they learned. Each “note-taker” can present what they drew or wrote to the class, and “question helpers” can share what they learned from the answers.

Reflection Prompt:

Ask students to reflect on the following:

- “How did this person become a civic hero in our community?”
 - “What qualities do they have that make them a hero?”
 - “What are some ways you can make a difference in your own community?”
 - “What did you learn from their story that inspires you?”
 - “Do you have to work for the government to be a hero? Why or why not?”
-

Assessment:

- **Participation in discussions and activities:** Did the student actively engage in the brainstorming and interview process?
- **Quality and creativity of drawings or notes:** Did the student capture meaningful aspects of the interview, and how did they thoughtfully represent what they learned?
- **Quality of interview questions and reflections:** Did the student ask relevant, thoughtful questions? Did they reflect on how they can make a difference, inspired by the civic hero's example?