

Civic Engagement for Middle School

Age: 6th-8th grades

Goal: students learn what it means to be good citizens through civic engagement.

Time: 4-5 classroom periods depending on class size. Students work individually or in groups.

Learning Objectives: students think critically about a political challenge or issue, either current or historic. Students conduct primary-source research into their chosen topics and create and present brief PowerPoint presentations on their findings.

Students that choose a current issue will present facts about the issue, how to address it, propose legislation as a solution, and theorize about what positive outcomes they expect to be realized by their legislation.

Students that choose an historic issue will present facts about the issue before legislation was adopted to address it, describe the legislation that was passed, and talk about the results, if available.

Activity: guide students through an example of a social/political issue and how citizens worked to address it.

As an example for this exercise we selected a powerhouse of legislation from the Progressive Era, the 1906 Pure Food and Drug Act (PFDA).

- a. Before this law was passed people didn't know what ingredients were used to make some of the foods and drugs that they bought. Some foods and drugs in that time were made from dangerous, addictive, or poisonous ingredients. Even Coca-Cola had cocaine in it. People consumed these products and gave them to their children not knowing the risks they were taking. Many people, including small children, became sick; became addicted to powerful drugs like morphine, cocaine, and opium; or even died. Eventually, people got so upset about these issues that they demanded the government do something about it.
- b. Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act to improve the health and safety of all Americans. This was achieved by citizens all over the country demanding change.

Day 1: Teach your students about the PFDA.

Describe for your students a variety of problems that existed prior to the legislation, what the legislation did, and how the legislation improved the lives and health of Americans.

See links to related articles below.

Offer some examples of current and other historic social issues and legislation to your students and ask them to give examples of their own as they think about what issue/law they want to learn and present to the class about. A few examples related to DEA are:

- The Controlled Substances Act
- The Anti-Drug Abuse Act
- The Harrison Narcotics Tax Act

- The Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act

Homework: Students will choose a social or political issue that they would like to investigate. They will do research and find several primary source articles on their chosen topics (be sure they know what the difference is between a primary-source article and Wikipedia). They will then summarize the articles in a short paper (300-500 words), and be prepared to discuss what they learned during the next class.

*It is important to remind your students that the assignment is to look at what the problem was or is and what the solution was or might be (i.e., social/legal problem=legislation created to improve people's lives).

Day 2: First half of class-your students discuss what they learned from their research. What kinds of questions do they have about their findings? How did their findings change the way they understand the purpose of laws and legislation in the U.S.?

Second half of class-walk your students through creating a simple PowerPoint presentation. Use the Pure Food and Drug Act as your example.

Homework: Students use their research, notes, and writings from the last few days to create PowerPoint presentations (2-4 minutes) about their topics to present to the class.

Day 3: Students present their PowerPoint presentations.

Day 4 (if needed): Students present their PowerPoint presentations.

At the end of class time-talk with your students about the experience. Have your students discuss some of the important things they learned through the assignment about U.S. civics, legislation, and history.

Evaluation: Students learn about civics and history, and a number of important current and historic social issues and U.S. laws. Students also learn about research, primary sources, summarizing articles, preparing a PowerPoint presentation, and public speaking.

If desired, students may be quizzed on the PFDA and graded on the content they created and their overall participation in the activity.

Recommended Readings:

<https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1901-1950/Pure-Food-and-Drug-Act/>

<https://guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-pure-food-drug-act-1906>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/united-states-and-canada/us-history/food-and-drug-act-1906>

<https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/fdas-evolving-regulatory-powers/part-i-1906-food-and-drugs-act-and-its-enforcement>

<https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/fdas-evolving-regulatory-powers/part-ii-1938-food-drug-cosmetic-act>

<https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/histories-product-regulation/food-standards-and-1906-act>

Additional recommended readings (general):

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/brain-power/brain-power-grades-6-9>

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/sculpting-your-brain-science-addiction>

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/brain-and-addiction>

Standards of Learning:

Common Core:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2](#)

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5](#)

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6](#)

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8](#)

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9](#)

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10](#)

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#)

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2](#)

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4](#)

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#)

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1](#)

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.3](#)

Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2](#)

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

Virginia Standards of Learning:

GOVT.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision-making, and responsible citizenship.

CE.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision-making, and responsible citizenship.

USII.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision-making, and responsible citizenship.