

KIDS VOTING USA

K-2 CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



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KIDS VOTING USA

K-2 ELECTIONS AND VOTING



INTRODUCTION TO THEME

The intent of this theme is to educate students about elections, from gaining an appreciation of the power of voting to studying the candidates and issues to understanding the registration process and participating in an election. The theme's activities fall under four main learning objectives:

- Students will develop an appreciation for the power and influence of voting.
- Students will learn how to study the candidates and issues relevant to an election.
- Students will understand what is involved in the registration and voting process.
- Students will learn how to stay involved with civic affairs after an election.



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**THE ODD VOTE**

(15 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn how to vote and implement the results.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Be prepared to create a tally chart on either the whiteboard/chalkboard or a flip chart.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask your students, *Is there only one way to vote? How do people vote for the President of the United States? How do you think people voted before there were machines? How do we sometimes vote in class?*
- ✓ Say, *Let's vote in an odd way today.*
- ✓ Demonstrate these three ways to vote:
 - ✓ Agree: wave both your hands in the air
 - ✓ No opinion: Fold your arms across your chest
 - ✓ Disagree: put both thumbs down and stamp your feet
- ✓ Make statements to vote on based on the interests of your students, such as: *Candy should be outlawed. School should be half a day.*
- ✓ Invite students to make statements to be voted on, like: *I like spinach. Red is my favorite color.*
- ✓ Conclude by voting on a statement that can be tallied and implemented immediately, such as: *We are going to vote on whether to have math early in the day or later.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Do you like voting this way? Why or why not?*
- ★ *Did your friends vote the same way you did? Does this matter?*
- ★ *Are there times when a vote should be private. Why?*
- ★ *On the final vote, did your vote give you any power? How?*

MORE!

Vote, tally, and implement as many decisions as possible during the week. Help your students understand the power of their votes through action and discussion.

VOTE QUOTE

"By mutual confidence and mutual aid great deeds are done, and great discoveries made."
– Homer, *The Illiad*

**VOTING CHAIN**

(20-30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students vote, tally, and implement the vote.

MATERIALS

Construction paper; *Yes/No Sign* handout; tape

GET READY

- ✓ Cut a small strip of construction paper to make a link for each child. Each strip of construction paper will be a link in a chain.
- ✓ Cut apart the *Yes/No Sign* handout.
- ✓ Pin the *Yes* sign and the *No* sign to a bulletin board so you can attach the students' links as they vote.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say to the children, *Have you and your friends ever had to make a decision about something that was hard to agree on? Maybe you were deciding what to watch on TV or where to eat. How did you finally make the decision? Voting is a fair way to make decisions.*
- ✓ Help the class choose an issue to vote on (such as snacks, activities, or recess time) that can be implemented immediately. State the issue as a question to be answered "Yes" or "No."
- ✓ Give your students the strips of paper. (You may ask them to write their names on them or you can explain the concept of a secret ballot where voting is confidential.)
- ✓ Explain that one link on a voting chain represents one vote.
- ✓ Let each student link his/her "vote" under the *Yes* sign or *No* sign.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Is the longest chain under the Yes sign or under the No sign? Let's count.*
- ★ *Can you see your own voting link?*
- ★ *Would the chain look different if you had not voted?*
- ★ *What might happen if you could vote as many times as you wished rather than once?*
- ★ *What do the results of our vote mean to us?*
- ★ *Was this a fair decision?*

MORE!

The class could vote on other issues during the week in this way or in others.



YES/NO SIGN

YES

NO

**YES OR NO GAME**

(15-20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students vote and tally the results.

MATERIALS*Yes & No Cards* handout; popsicle sticks**GET READY**

- ✓ Copy and cut out the *Yes* card and the *No* card from the *Yes & No Cards* handout.
- ✓ Attach the two cards to popsicle sticks, if desired.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ As a class, brainstorm 10 to 15 statements that can be judged with a vote of yes or no. Have fun with this list. Some suggestions are:
I like broccoli. I like the color blue. I wish I could fly. School should be all year round. It was okay for Goldilocks to go inside the bears' house. All whale killing should be stopped. There is too much violence on TV.
- ✓ Either designate a student leader or lead the activity yourself.
- ✓ Announce the first issue to be voted on.
- ✓ Hold up the *Yes* sign and point to one side of the room. Have students wishing to vote *Yes* go to that side of the room.
- ✓ Hold up the *No* sign and point to the other side of the room. Have students wishing to vote *No* go to that side of the room.
- ✓ Continue to do the same thing for the rest of the statements.
- ✓ Hold a final vote that can be implemented directly such as, "We will do math next."
- ✓ Tally each vote, write the results on the blackboard, and implement the vote.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did the same people vote "Yes" on every issue? Did the same people vote "No?"*
- ★ *Did any of your friends vote "Yes" when you voted "No," or "No" when you voted "Yes?" How did that make you feel?*
- ★ *Did you think about changing your vote to be on the same side as a friend?*
- ★ *Would you have voted differently if this had been a secret ballot?*
- ★ *Might a secret vote be important sometimes? When?*
- ★ *Which vote gave you power? What power did it give you?*
- ★ *How does voting give adults power?*

MORE!

During the next week, vote as often as possible on issues that can be implemented in the classroom so students can see the direct relationship between their votes and their lives.



YES & NO CARDS

YES

NO



WHICH HAND?

(15 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students gather information before making a decision.

MATERIALS

Small prizes, such as stickers or pieces of candy (preferably something you can hide in one hand)

GET READY

- ✓ Make sure you have the small prizes ready and that there is enough for your entire class.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say to your students, *Each of you can guess which one of my hands is holding a prize. You will have a better chance at guessing correctly if you ask for information first. Information will help you make a better decision.*
- ✓ Call your students one at a time to guess which hand holds the prize.
- ✓ Ask each member of your class if they would like some information. If they do, give a clue such as: *Choose the hand closest to the window* or *The hand moving up and down is empty.*
- ✓ Allow children who choose the wrong hand to try again later.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did information help you make a good choice?*
- ★ *Can information help you make a good choice when choosing a leader?*
- ★ *Where can you find information about people who want to be our leaders?*

MORE!

Encourage students to bring in information they find on the election such as newspaper articles, pictures, cartoons, bumper stickers, etc., and display them on a Kids Voting bulletin board.

VOTE QUOTE

“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what was never meant to be.” – Thomas Jefferson

**THREE CHANGES**

(15-20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students study each other carefully to improve information-gathering skills.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Divide your students into teams of two.
- ✓ Have students in the pairs face each other.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say to your students, *Perhaps you have lost some money or a toy in a room that you often play in. When you did, you probably looked around the room much more carefully than ever before. When we need to, we can observe or study a person or thing very carefully. In this game you will practice observing carefully.* (All teams will play simultaneously.)
- ✓ Tell the students to look at each other carefully.
- ✓ When you say, *Three changes*, direct them to turn back-to-back and make three changes in their appearance: change their hair, untie their shoelaces, tuck in their shirt, etc.
- ✓ When they have made the changes, say, *Face each other.*
- ✓ Ask the students to identify the changes their partners have made.
- ✓ Students can play several times, changing partners occasionally.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did you get better at observing another person?*
- ★ *Do you think we should carefully observe a person who wants to be our leader? Why?*
- ★ *How can we get information about a person who wants to be our leader?*
- ★ *What information do we need to know about a person who wants to be our leader?*
- ★ *Who is currently looking to be our leader?*
- ★ *What information do you have about them? How can you find out more?*

MORE!

Encourage your students to bring to class any election paraphernalia they find. Ask them to look in magazines, newspapers, and mailed brochures. Pin this information to a bulletin board.



ELECTION BULLETIN BOARD

(5 minutes a day for two weeks)

OBJECTIVE

Students share election-oriented information they gather from the media by constructing a bulletin board of articles and pictures.

MATERIALS

Colored pencils and crayons; *Election Bulletin Board* handout

GET READY

- ✓ Gather colored pencils and crayons.
- ✓ Prepare a bulletin board in the classroom that can be used for election information.
- ✓ Prepare a note on the back of the *Election Bulletin Board* handout to go home with the children that explains the assignment: With parents or guardians, each student will look for one article or picture about the election, and attach it to the paper. (Students may alternatively draw a picture about the election.)
- ✓ Sample note to families: *Our class is making a special Kids Voting bulletin board and each student will help by attaching an article about the election to this paper. Please help your child to find an article or picture by the end of the week. If you cannot find one together, the student can draw a picture about the election instead.*
- ✓ Duplicate one handout for each student, with the picture of people talking on one side and the note to families on the other.

INSTRUCTIONS

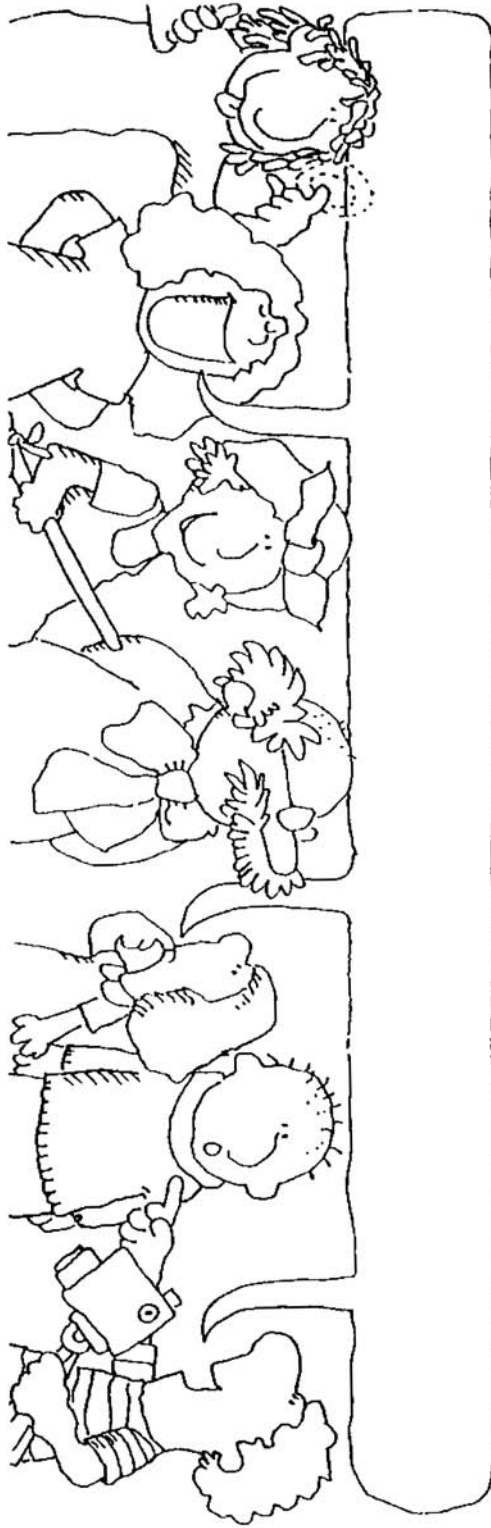
- ✓ After you pass out the handout, ask the students to write their names above the caption bubble.
- ✓ Look at the picture together. Say, *People are talking to each other in this picture. Who are the people talking?* (“a lady who is cleaning her house,” “an old man,” etc.) Give your students some time to color in the people.
- ✓ Say, *Have you been hearing people talk about the election at home or on television? One of the most important things people can say about the election is to remind each other: “Vote!” Let’s write that word in our bubble so it looks like everyone is saying it.*
- ✓ Write V-O-T-E on the board for your students to copy.
- ✓ Explain that the students can post their papers on the Kids Voting bulletin board when there is a picture/article about the election attached to it.
- ✓ Tell the students that the letter on the back of the handout is asking their families to help them find or draw a picture.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Where will you look for a picture about the election? Who will help you to find one?*
- ★ *If you can’t find a picture, what kind of picture could you draw?* (A ballot, a voter = person holding a ballot, a candidate = person running for office, etc.)



ELECTION BULLETIN BOARD



**KIDS VOTING REGISTRATION**

(20-30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students understand the importance of registering to vote.

MATERIALS

Voter Registration Cards handout; *Registration Badges* handout; lined paper

GET READY

- ✓ Copy enough *Voter Registration Cards* for your students.
- ✓ Prepare three *Registration Badges* – cut them out from the handout. If possible, print them out on colored paper.
- ✓ Put two or three tables or desks together at the front of the room.
- ✓ For more information, see “Elections” in the Appendix.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say to your students, *Have you ever signed up for swimming lessons or school? If so, you probably had to go in before the first day of class and sign up. Another word for signing up is “registering.” Before you can vote you must register to put your name on the list of voters.*
- ✓ Assign three students to be the registrars for the class. Give each registrar a *Registration Badge*.
- ✓ Give each registrar a stack of *Registration Cards* and a registration sheet. (The registration sheet could be a piece of lined paper folded down the middle.) Have the registrars sit at the desks/chairs you put together.

- ✓ Instruct the students to come to the tables/desks three at a time to fill out their *Registration Cards* and sign the registration sheets. (Have the students sign their names on the left side of the registration sheet.)
- ✓ Each student goes to one registrar who helps them through the registration process, so it is important that the registrars know how the process works.
- ✓ Have the registrars switch roles with students who have already registered so that they have a chance to register.
- ✓ Tell your students that you will send the *Registration Cards* home with them the day before the Kids Voting election so they can take them to the polls.
- ✓ Save the registration sheet for the *Voting Simulation* activity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why do we register?*
- ★ *What could happen if people voted without registering?*

MORE!

As an alternative to classroom registration, help coordinate a school registration day for both students and parents. Invite a deputy registrar for parents and let students register for the Kids Voting election at the same time.

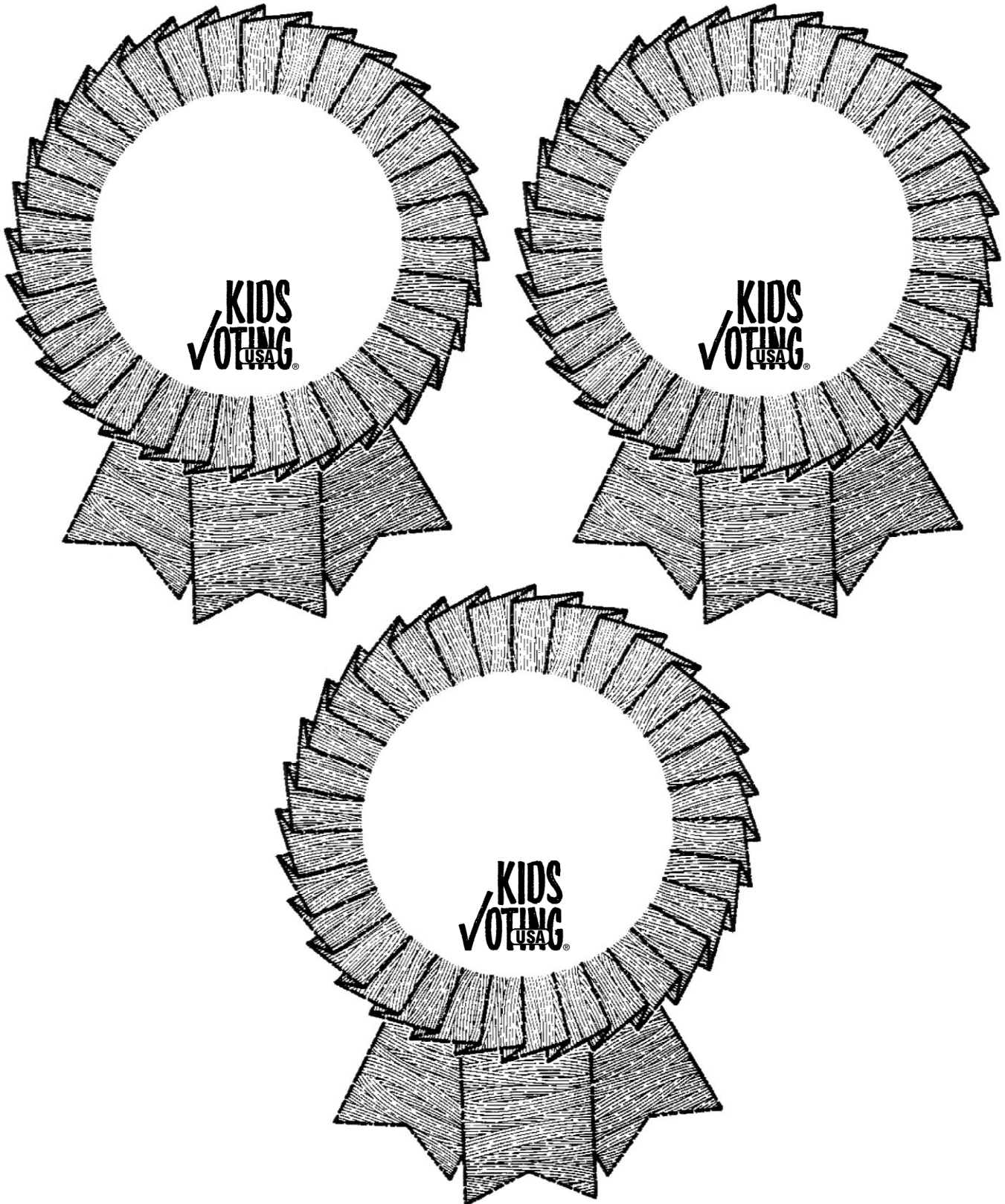


VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS

 Voter Registration Student _____ Teacher _____ School _____	 Voter Registration Student _____ Teacher _____ School _____
 Voter Registration Student _____ Teacher _____ School _____	 Voter Registration Student _____ Teacher _____ School _____



REGISTRATION BADGES



**VOTING SIMULATION**

(30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students vote in a simulated polling place to become familiar with the voting process.

MATERIALS

Polling Place Diagram handout; *Ballots* handout; material for a ballot box and voting booth

GET READY

- ✓ Choose an issue that will impact the students rather quickly. For instance, vote on what to play at recess or how to determine seating or something fun like, *What tastes best: a chocolate chip or peanut butter cookie?*
- ✓ Prepare ballots from the *Ballots* handout or determine a way to vote on blank pieces of paper.
- ✓ Prepare a simple ballot box and voting booth.
- ✓ Arrange a corner of the classroom to resemble a polling place as shown in the diagram.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Explain the duties of the precinct workers (see handout) and assign students to role play the part of the workers. Seat them as shown in the diagram.
- ✓ Give one of the judges the registration sheet derived from the *Kids Voting Registration* activity.
- ✓ Give the clerks lined paper to record the voters as they come in.
- ✓ Hand the ballots to the other judge.
- ✓ Seat the marshal by the ballot box.
- ✓ Ask a student to demonstrate by casting the first vote.

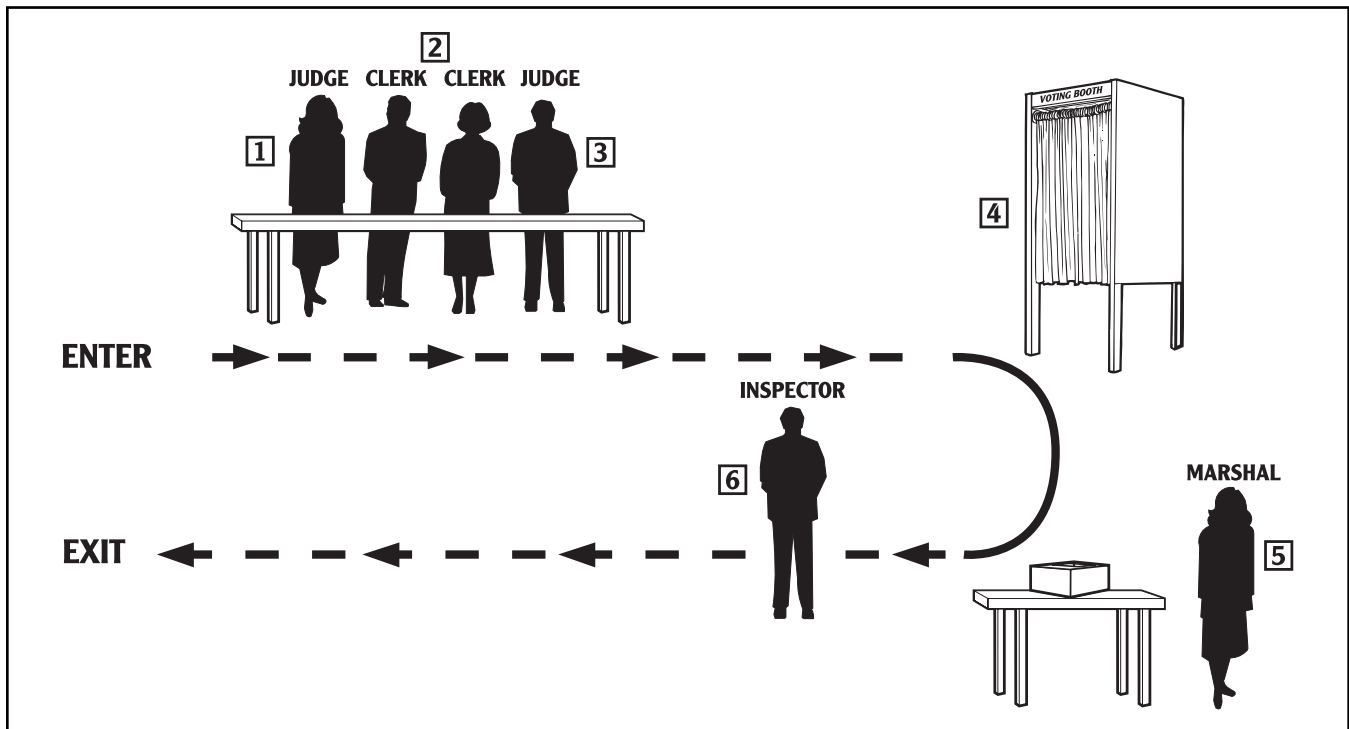
- ✓ Let each student go through the voting process.
- ✓ Instruct the marshal to tally and announce the vote.
- ✓ Implement the vote.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Who can go into a polling place?*
- ★ *Have you ever gone with your parents? If yes, what was it like?*
- ★ *How do adults know where to go to vote?*
- ★ *If they don't know, how can they find out?*
- ★ *Can everybody vote?*
- ★ *Have you voted at the Kids Voting booth before? What was it like?*
- ★ *Where will you go to cast your Kids Voting vote this election?*
- ★ *Are there any rules in a polling place?*
- ★ *What do you think are good manners for a polling place?*



POLLING PLACE DIAGRAM



At the polls there are usually: one inspector; two judges — one Republican, one Democrat; two clerks — one Republican, one Democrat; and one marshal.

As you enter you will generally meet:

- 1** A judge with the register, a list containing the names of registered voters in the precinct, who will ask your name, find it in the register, and ask you to sign beside it
- 2** Two clerks, one for each party, who will add your name to a list to witness that you have voted
- 3** Another judge, who will hand you your ballot, and help you understand how to cast your ballot
- 4** A voting booth
- 5** The marshal, who will take your ballot and place it in the ballot box
- 6** The inspector, who oversees the polling place and assigns all the workers their duties

Poll workers have other duties. For instance the marshal makes sure that the law is kept. She watches that no one campaigns within 150 feet of the polls and she checks to see that everyone in line when the poll closes gets a chance to vote.

You, the voter, will:

1. Sign in by writing your name in the register
2. Take a ballot from a judge
3. Go to the booth and vote
4. Return your ballot to the marshal



BALLOTS

<div>BALLOT VOTE FOR ONE</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____</div>	<div>BALLOT VOTE FOR ONE</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____</div>	<div>BALLOT VOTE FOR ONE</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____</div>
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**MARKING A BALLOT**

(15-20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students study and mark sample ballots.

MATERIALS

Sample *Kids Voting Ballot*

GET READY

- ✓ Copy a sample *Kids Voting Ballot* for each student. (If you have not received them, check with your Kids Voting contact person.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Study the ballot with your students. Identify the pictures and issues you feel they can understand.
- ✓ Ask your students to pretend they are at the polls and have them mark their ballots.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How did you decide who to vote for?*
- ★ *How do grown-ups decide who to vote for?*
- ★ *Where do they get their information?*
- ★ *What can you do if you don't know who to vote for?* (Ask for help from a parent or guardian; listen to the commercials on TV or the radio; etc.)
- ★ *Where will you go to mark a Kids Voting ballot?*

MORE!

Encourage your students to take their ballots home and discuss the candidates and issues with their families.

VOTE QUOTE

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what was never meant to be." – Thomas Jefferson

**PENCIL FLAGS**

(20-30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students advocate voting.

MATERIALS

Pencil Flag Format handout; old newspapers and magazines (optional); scissors, tape, and glue

GET READY

- ✓ Copy and cut a *Pencil Flag Format* for each student.
- ✓ Gather old newspapers and magazines (optional).
- ✓ Gather scissors, tape, and glue.
- ✓ Write the word *VOTE* on the board.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell your students that they can help our country by reminding others to vote. Explain that this project will help them remind others.
- ✓ Instruct your students to find and cut the letters *V*, *O*, *T*, and *E* from magazines and newspapers (or use the letters on the format).
- ✓ Help them paste the letters on the flag format. They can then add designs and color.
- ✓ Help them tape/fasten the flags to their pencils.
- ✓ Have your students use the flags at school for a few days, then tell them to take them home to remind adults to vote. They could stick the pencil flags in a plant or flower arrangement (with permission) or just use them as pencils.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *When is election day?*
- ★ *What word is on your flag?*
- ★ *Why should we vote?*
- ★ *Who can you remind to vote with your pencil flag?*
- ★ *Who can you remind to take you to vote?*

MORE!

As a grade level or whole school project, have classes make flags large enough to be read from the street and hang them in front of the school to remind the community to vote.



PENCIL FLAG FORMAT

			☆ _____ ☆	V	O
			☆ _____ ☆	T	E
			☆ _____ ☆	V	O
			☆ _____ ☆	T	E
			☆ _____ ☆	V	O
			☆ _____ ☆	T	E

**MARKING THE WINNERS**

(5-10 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students monitor the returns to stay politically active.

MATERIALS

Kids Voting Ballot

GET READY

- ✓ Prepare monitoring ballots by writing the following on a sample *Kids Voting Ballot*:
Place a check by the candidate or issue that is ahead at your bedtime. Circle the candidate or issue that has won or is ahead just before you leave for school.
- ✓ Make a copy of the monitoring ballot for each student.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Read the instructions you wrote on the ballot to the students.
- ✓ Instruct the students to take their monitoring ballots home and watch the returns on TV.
- ✓ Ask them to bring their ballots back the next day.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For election day:

- ★ *Which candidates/issues do you think will win?*
- ★ *How might you feel if a person you voted for does not win?*
- ★ *What can you do if a person you voted for does not win?*

For the day after elections:

- ★ *Who won? Who is the leader of our (country, state, city, school board, etc.)?*
- ★ *Why do you think they won?*
- ★ *How can we support our leaders?*
- ★ *Do you have any sad or happy feelings?*
- ★ *Did the people at your house talk about the elections? Would you like to share what they said?*
- ★ *Now that we have voted, how else can we help our country?*

MORE!

As a class, write a letter of congratulations to a winning candidate or a letter of consolation to a losing candidate. Let all the students sign their names. Send it by e-mail if possible.



THE WISH TREE

(30-45 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students make wishes for their country regarding changes they would like to see.

MATERIALS

Star Cards handout; art supplies (crayons, markers, etc.); yarn; a hole puncher; scissors

GET READY

- ✓ Find a large, bare branch and place it in a pot filled with pebbles, or design a large tree out of paper on the bulletin board. (Alternatively find a bare tree outside for this activity.)
- ✓ Copy and cut apart a star card for each student.
- ✓ Gather: one 8-inch-long piece of string or yarn for each student; crayons, markers, or colored pencils; scissors; and a hole puncher.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Instruct your students to cut out the star card, fold it in half, and color or decorate the cover.
- ✓ As they are working, ask them to think of a wish they would like to come true for our country. For example: I wish we could lower crime rates.
- ✓ Help them draw or write their wish on the inside of the card and sign their names.
- ✓ Help them punch a hole in the corner and tie string through the hole.
- ✓ Hold a ceremony so the students can tie their cards to the tree. They may read or describe their wishes as they place them on the tree or students may discover the wishes on their own at a later time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


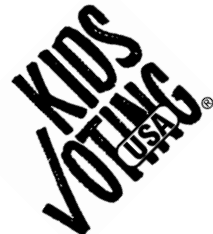


- ★ *Can wishes come true?*
- ★ *How can our wishes for our country come true?*
- ★ *Is there anything a young person can do to help these wishes come true?*
- ★ *Does this Kids Voting activity count as helping? If so, why?*
- ★ *If we practice self-discipline and patience in our classroom, might that help?*
- ★ *Can you think of anyone who had a wish or a dream for our country and made it come true? Tell us about it.*

MORE!

Brainstorm and vote on a wish for our country that your class can make come true, such as a cleaner school or park. Work together to make it happen!



STAR CARDS

	<p><i>"How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment. We can start slowly changing the world. How lovely that everyone great and small can make a contribution."</i> — Anne Frank</p> 
	<p><i>"How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment. We can start slowly changing the world. How lovely that everyone great and small can make a contribution."</i> — Anne Frank</p> 



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

MY VOTE GIVES ME POWER

- ★ What is a vote?
- ★ What does voting do?
- ★ Does voting make a difference? How?
- ★ What is an election?
- ★ What is the purpose of an election?
- ★ What power does voting have?

I STUDY THE CANDIDATES AND ISSUES

- ★ What does it mean to study something?
- ★ What is a candidate?
- ★ What does a candidate hope to do?
- ★ Do you know any candidates in this election?
- ★ What is an issue?
- ★ Can you give an example of an issue?
- ★ What issues are important to you?
- ★ Why is it important to study the candidates?
- ★ Why is it important to study the issues?

I REGISTER AND VOTE

- ★ What does it mean to register?
- ★ What do you think you do when you register?
- ★ Why is it important to register?
- ★ Do you need to register before you vote?
- ★ Why is it important to vote?
- ★ What do you accomplish when you register and vote?

I CONTINUE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- ★ What does it mean to make a difference?
- ★ Does voting make a difference?
- ★ What else can you do to make a difference?
- ★ Do candidates make promises? Can you give me an example?
- ★ Do all candidates keep the promises they make once they are elected?
- ★ What can you do to make sure that candidates keep their promises when they are elected?
- ★ What do you think is important to do once an election is over?

**LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY***Duck For President* by Doreen Cronin**OBJECTIVE**

Students investigate elections and the voting experience.

MATERIALS

Duck For President - Doreen Cronin

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

- ✓ Have your students start thinking about the story *Duck For President* before you start reading it. Tell your class that they will be constructing a story similar to the one they are about to read by each contributing a sentence.
- ✓ Say, *Today we will be reading a story about a duck that runs for president. Let's make some guesses about what might happen by making up a similar story of our own. I will start with the first sentence and then everyone else will contribute a sentence.*
- ✓ Say, *There once was a duck that lived on a farm that ran for president...*
- ✓ Have each student contribute a sentence to the story.
- ✓ After your class creates their own story, read the book and point out any connections the story has to the one your class made up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why did Duck first run to be in charge of the farm? To be governor? To then be president?*
- ★ *How did Duck win those elections?*

- ★ *What does it mean to campaign? What is an election? What does it mean to register and vote?*
- ★ *Why did Duck head back to the farm in the end?*
- ★ *Why is voting important? What does it accomplish?*

ACTIVITY

- ✓ Invite your students to be creative about the story by asking them to imagine one of the speeches Duck gave.
- ✓ Say, *Twice in the story Duck gave speeches that only other ducks could understand. What do you think Duck was saying in these speeches?*
- ✓ Ask your students to deliver speeches of their own to the class. Tell them they need to include the words "Vote" and "Election" in their speech and they should list the promises Duck would have made to the other ducks. Encourage your students to be creative.
- ✓ Break up your students into groups of two so they can practice their speeches and help each other perfect them.
- ✓ Invite students to share their speeches with the class. Your class should respectfully quack when each person is done delivering his/her speech.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: I GO TO THE POLLS**

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students engage in an authentic voting experience.

MATERIALS

Election materials supplied by your Kids Voting USA affiliate

GET READY

- ✓ Have your students' voter registration cards handy. (They should have filled them out during the *Kids Voting Registration* activity. If your students did not participate in this activity, consider doing it with them prior to their casting their votes.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell your students, *Now that we know what voting is and why it is important, let's use our right to vote and make a difference!*
- ✓ Give your students back their registration cards prior to their voting experience so they can take them to the polls.
- ✓ Have your students participate in your local Kids Voting USA affiliate election. If you are not sure who your contact person is (whether a grade-level chair, school principal, etc.) visit our Web site: www.kidsvotingusa.org and click on "Affiliate Network." It will give you the contact information for your local Kids Voting USA affiliate. They should be able to give you the information you need.

- ✓ Have your students reflect, either verbally or in written form, both on their voting experience and on how they plan to continue to make a difference in their community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How did it make you feel when you voted?*
- ★ *Does voting give you power? How?*
- ★ *How do you think it would feel if you were not allowed to vote?*
- ★ *Do all people vote who are able to? Why do some people not vote? How do you feel about that?*
- ★ *Why is it important to study the candidates and issues?*
- ★ *What are good ways to learn about the candidates and issues?*
- ★ *What does it mean to register? Why is registering important?*
- ★ *Is voting the only way you can make a difference? What else can you do to make a difference?*

KIDS VOTING USA

K-2

**DEMOCRACY AND
THE PEOPLE**



INTRODUCTION TO THEME

The intent of this theme is to provide an understanding of and a context for American democracy and citizenship, from the rights and responsibilities of students in their local, state, and national communities to the world beyond. The theme's activities fall under four main learning objectives:

- Students will understand the principles that make a government democratic.
- Students will understand how America fits the model of a democracy.
- Students will learn the rights and responsibilities of an American citizen.
- Students will learn the context of American democracy within the world.



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LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY

<i>D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet</i> by Elisa Grodin	18
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CULMINATING ACTIVITY

Democracy And Me	19
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**PINWHEELS**

(20-30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students discuss how a democracy is powered by the people that participate in it.

MATERIALS

Pinwheels Pattern handout; fasteners, hole punchers, scissors, crayons/markers; plastic straws

GET READY

- ✓ Copy a pinwheel pattern for each student.
- ✓ Set out fasteners for each student.
- ✓ Gather a hole puncher, scissors, and crayons or markers.
- ✓ Buy plastic straws, flatten them at one end, and punch a hole to use them for stems.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Instruct your students to decorate their pinwheels as they wish. Then tell them to cut on the heavy lines of the pattern and fold on the lines as indicated.
- ✓ Help them stick the fasteners through the pinwheels and the stems. Be sure they keep the fasteners loose enough so the pinwheels will turn.
- ✓ Ask your students to hold the pinwheels still (without blowing on them) to see if they turn.
- ✓ Then ask them to power the pinwheels by blowing on them.
- ✓ Suggest to your class that the pinwheels and our government are alike in that they both need a source of power.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

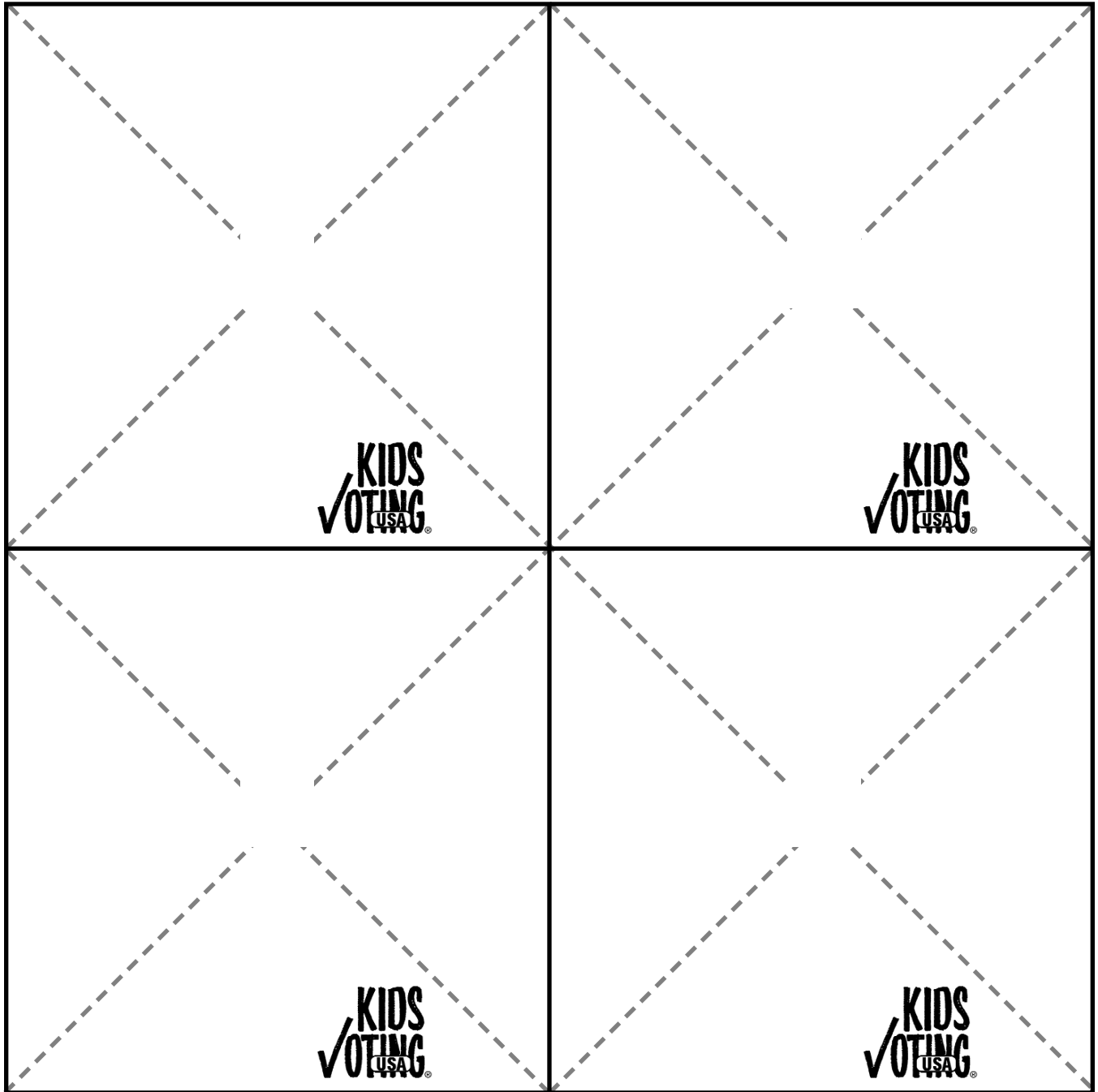
- ★ *Did the pinwheels turn without your power?*
- ★ *Does the government work without our power?*
- ★ *We power the pinwheels with our breath. How do we power our government? (With our vote, by running or helping someone else run for office, writing letters, serving on committees, paying our taxes, etc.)*

MORE!

Use fluorescent crayons and a black light on the pinwheels. Also, have your students vote on an issue that can be implemented quickly so they can feel the power their vote gives them. Possible issues might be room arrangement, recess game, a class assignment, etc.



PINWHEELS PATTERN



**WHO'S THE LEADER?**

(15-20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students identify leaders that direct or guide us.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Say to your students, *Before I became a teacher, I studied so I could better help you learn. In a democracy, our leaders study the problems of our country so they can help us solve them.*
- ✓ Say, *In democracies we have leaders who make decisions. They are allowed to make these decisions, however, only because we gave them the permission.*
- ✓ Say, *We are going to play a game about leadership.*

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have your students stand in a circle.
- ✓ Have one student volunteer to briefly stand outside the room (so they don't know what the class is doing).
- ✓ Select another student to be the leader.
- ✓ Tell the leader to make motions such as moving hands, tapping feet, nodding head, etc.
- ✓ Instruct the other students to do whatever the leader does. Call the volunteer student back in the room.
- ✓ Ask the volunteer student to stand in the center of the circle, attentively watch his/her classmates, and try to identify the leader. When the student discovers the leader, start the game over with two new students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What was the leader's role in this game?*
- ★ *What do the leaders of our community, our state, and our country do?*
- ★ *Can you name some leaders in your home, school, or community?*
- ★ *Were you ever a leader before you played this game?*
- ★ *Have you ever followed a leader?*
- ★ *Are there certain ways leaders should act? What makes a good leader?*

VOTE QUOTE

"The whole of government consists in the art of being honest." – Thomas Jefferson

**THE PRESIDENT'S HATS**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students examine the jobs of the president to discuss components of American democracy.

MATERIALS

The Hat Patterns handout; *The President's Work* handout; small boxes

GET READY

- ✓ Copy and cut apart *The Hat Patterns* handout. Place each hat on the front of an open box.
- ✓ Divide your class into groups of three.
- ✓ Copy and cut apart a set of *The President's Work* cards for each group of three.
- ✓ Read "The Office of President" in the Appendix.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Prepare your class for the activity with a discussion about the powers and duties of the president and define any words that might be new to them. Specifically, go over what the job titles mean: head of state, chief diplomat, etc.
- ✓ Give each group a set of cards.
- ✓ Instruct each group to discuss each card, decide which responsibility goes to which hat/job, and place the cards in the correct hat box.
- ✓ When all the cards are in the hat boxes, tell your students that they are going to see what everyone else thought.
- ✓ Invite students to draw the cards out of the boxes.
- ✓ You can keep track by posting them on the board or by taping them to the front of the boxes.

- ✓ Go over which duties belonged to each job:

Answers:

- ✓ Head of State: Officially visits other countries
- ✓ Chief Diplomat: Helps settle problems among other countries
- ✓ Chief Executive: Carries out laws
- ✓ Commander-in-Chief: Defends country during war
- ✓ Party Chief: Heads political party

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

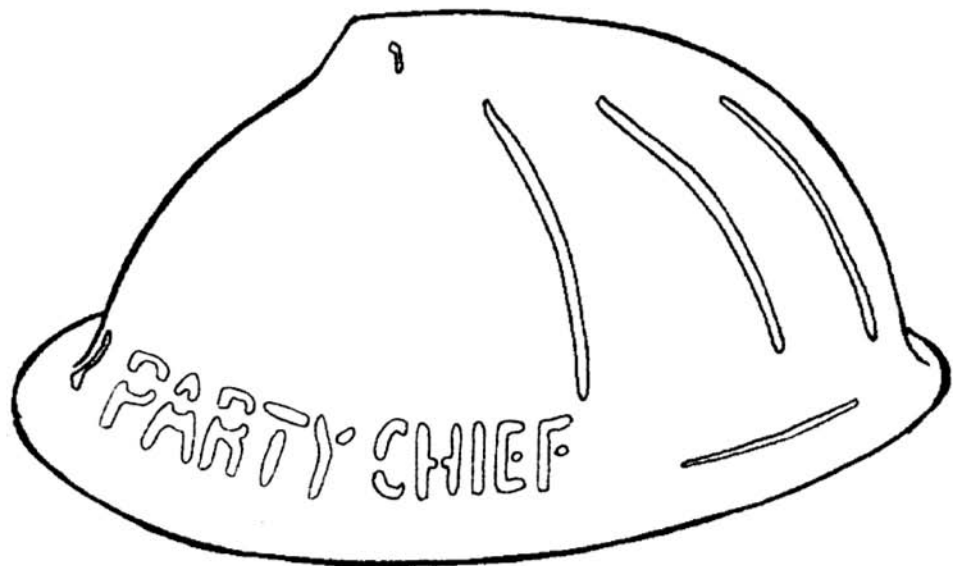
- ★ *What do you think is the most important job of the president? Why?*
- ★ *Which hat would you like to wear? Why?*
- ★ *Which hat would you not like to wear? Why?*
- ★ *What characteristics do you think a president should have?*

MORE!

Develop a similar activity for the governor or mayor.



THE HAT PATTERNS





THE HAT PATTERNS





THE PRESIDENT'S WORK

HEADS POLITICAL PARTY

HELPS SETTLE PROBLEMS
AMONG OTHER NATIONS

CARRIES OUT LAWS

DEFENDS THE COUNTRY
DURING WAR

OFFICIALLY VISITS
OTHER COUNTRIES

**IF I WERE...**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students consider the power of American democracy in action, making decisions as an elected leader would.

MATERIALS

If I Were... handout; additional lined paper; scissors, glue

GET READY

- ✓ Copy an *If I Were...* handout for each student. If possible, use colored paper.
- ✓ Have additional paper available for students to write on.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask, *In America can our leaders do whatever they want?* Listen to student responses.
- ✓ Next, ask, *What types of leaders do we have in America?* (president, vice president, governor, senator, etc.) *What are the jobs of these leaders?*
- ✓ Tell your students to imagine they were just elected to office. Ask, *What office would you want to hold? Governor? Senator? Mayor? President?*
- ✓ Provide each student with an *If I Were...* handout. Tell them to use this handout to brainstorm ideas of what they would do if elected to office.
- ✓ Allow your students to write their ideas on the handout. You can have the students work with each other to come up with ideas.

- ✓ Students can additionally cut out the position they want from the handout and either glue or tape it to what they write (see handout).
- ✓ Allow students to share their work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What were some of the best ideas that we heard?*
- ★ *Did the ideas sound like they would be good for everyone? (Remember, leaders need to do their best for everyone.)*
- ★ *Think about the office you wrote about. Can you name a power this leader has?*
- ★ *Could you actually become this leader? What could you do to become a good leader?*



IF I WERE...

IF I WERE...

Senator

President

Mayor

Governor

**WHAT'S FOR KIDS?**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students investigate the services provided directly to children by their government.

MATERIALS

Telephone book; drawing paper, markers, crayons

GET READY

- ✓ Consult the telephone book's government pages to write down the names of programs in your town which provide services directly for children: Parks and Recreation, Pools, Museums, Libraries, Bicycle Registration, etc. Post these on your board.
- ✓ Gather sheets of paper, crayons, and markers.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say, *In America, our government plans and organizes activities and services for the children in our communities.*
- ✓ Point out to your students that they take advantage of city services in many ways. Ask, *Who has a library card? Who plays in the park? Who is part of a soccer league?, etc.*
- ✓ Ask each student to choose a city service he/she likes to use and to draw a picture of him/her using the service. (Examples: swimming in the city pool, reading books at the library, visiting the children's museum, etc.)
- ✓ Instruct your students to share their drawings with each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did any two or three people choose the same city service?*
- ★ *How does the town pay for the swimming pool, library, soccer field, etc.?*
- ★ *How does voting affect city services for kids?*

MORE!

Invite the director of parks and recreation or the museum or library director to speak to your class about programs for children.

Thanks to former Tempe, Arizona Mayor Neil Giuliano for assistance with this lesson.

**CAR-CAR**

(15 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students practice being responsible and articulate their responsibility to vote.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Arrange to work in a room with a large open space.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Explain to your students that they are going to play a game in which they need to be responsible.
- ✓ Help your students pair off and decide who will be the drivers and who will be the cars.
- ✓ Ask the drivers to stand behind the cars with their hands on the cars' shoulders.
- ✓ Have the cars shut their eyes.
- ✓ Tell the drivers to steer their cars by pulling gently, with their hands, on the cars' shoulders.
- ✓ Instruct the drivers to begin when you say "green light" and to stop when you say "red light."
- ✓ Play for a few minutes, and then have the pairs change positions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What does it mean to be responsible?*
- ★ *What were the drivers responsible for?*
- ★ *What were the cars responsible for?*
- ★ *What happened if one person was not responsible?*
- ★ *Why should people be responsible to vote?*
- ★ *Why should people be responsible in everything they do?*
- ★ *What can happen if people are not responsible?*

MORE!

Suggest to your students that they play this game and talk about responsibility with those at home.

VOTE QUOTE

"Politics is just another word for your future."
– Unknown

**“I CAN VOTE” SONG**

(15 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students recognize that voting is a right and privilege that makes a difference.

MATERIALS

“I Can Vote” Song handout

GET READY

- ✓ Either learn the song yourself or find someone to teach it to your class.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Teach your class the song.
- ✓ Use it in a program with hand movement and marching.
- ✓ Help your students make red, white, and blue decorations.
- ✓ Have your students wear red, white, and blue.
- ✓ Have your class perform for their parents/guardians or for the school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What makes America a special place to live?*
- ★ *Does one vote make a difference? Why?*
- ★ *Can kids make our country better? How?*



"I CAN VOTE" SONG

"I CAN VOTE" SONG

I Can Vote

Brightly

Words & Music by
Cathy P. Shepherd

Optional descant I can vote. I'll make a diff - 'rence

1. I am young and I'm learn - ing a - bout the world I see, I am
2. I am one, just one per - son but one and one make two. You will

with my vote, you'll see the diff - 'rence. I am

us - ing my know - ledge to make a bet - ter me. I can help keep my coun - try free
see what a diff - 'rence that one or two can do. When you mul - ti - ply peo - ple the

young but I can vote.

keep its lib - er - ty. I will stand for the right and vote wise and care - ful - ly.
won - ders nev - er cease, As we build for the fu - ture, work - ing to keep our peace.

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1558 W. 1st St., Mesa, Arizona (602) 962-4759

**FRIENDS AFAR**

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

The class contacts students overseas to learn about a different country.

MATERIALS

Appropriate letter-writing materials: lined paper, pens/pencils, envelopes, etc.

GET READY

Arrange for a pen pal from another country to exchange information about their country.

- ✓ Write to: World Wise Schools
990 K Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20526.
- ✓ Look for pen pal opportunities on the Internet. A good Web site to visit is www.stonesoup.com/main2/penpal.html.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ As a class, correspond with a class from another country.
- ✓ Have your students brainstorm some questions/ideas that they want to include in their letters.
- ✓ Encourage your students to ask questions:
How is your country different from the United States? Do you know people who vote? How old do you have to be to vote? What is the name of your current leader?
- ✓ Continue to correspond with this class throughout the school year.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How is our government similar to other countries' governments?*
- ★ *How is it different?*
- ★ *What did you learn that you liked most about the other country?*
- ★ *Were there any things you did not like?*

**DEMOCRACY IN THE PRINT**

(30-40 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students explore aspects of another democracy.

MATERIALS

Newspapers, magazines, periodicals; scissors

GET READY

- ✓ Tell your students that there are other democracies in the world besides the United States. In fact, there are many countries where people have the right to vote.
- ✓ Inform your class that they are going to learn about another democratic country.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell your class they are going to collect information on another democratic country.
- ✓ Have your students vote to decide what country they want to learn about. Provide some ideas if necessary: France, Australia, etc.
- ✓ Once the class has chosen a country, start collecting magazines and newspapers that contain articles and pictures about the country. If at all possible, find articles that are written for children.
- ✓ Dedicate a bulletin board in the classroom to the articles and pictures.
- ✓ Bring these magazines and newspapers into school and show your students how you found the articles. Show them how you cut them out and attached them to the bulletin board.

- ✓ Read aloud what some of the articles say and explain what some of the pictures show. Make connections between the country the class selected and America — explain how the country is a democracy.
- ✓ Encourage your students to bring in any materials they can find on the country. They may want to ask their parents/guardians for help finding these items.
- ✓ Give your students time to make a contribution (it may take some time for them to find appropriate/related material). Announce intermittently any updates to the bulletin board.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What makes the country we learned about a democracy?*
- ★ *How is this country like the United States?*
- ★ *How is this country different than the United States?*



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

- ★ Have you heard the word “democracy” before? Where and when?
- ★ Do you know what a government is?
- ★ Who has the power in a democracy? The leader or the people he/she leads?
- ★ How are decisions made in a democracy?
- ★ Sometimes people don’t agree with the decisions that are made. Should everyone still have to stand by those decisions? Why or why not?
- ★ If you did not live in a democracy, what do you think you would be missing?
- ★ How can you, as students, participate in a democracy?
- ★ Does everyone you know understand what a democracy is? What can you do to help others understand democracy?

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

- ★ Who makes the decisions in America?
- ★ What do adults do to contribute to our country?
- ★ What does our government do for us?
- ★ How do you support your country?
- ★ What can you do to make our country better?
- ★ What types of people make good leaders? Good presidents?
- ★ What do you think is the best thing about living in America?

A CITIZEN’S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- ★ Do you know what it means to be responsible?
- ★ How are you responsible? Give me an example.
- ★ What does having a right mean?
- ★ Can you think of an example of a right?
- ★ What do you think the freedom of speech is?
- ★ What does the word “freedom” mean to you?
- ★ Do you think kids have enough rights?

DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD

- ★ Can you tell me the names of some other countries?
- ★ Do you think all countries are the same?
- ★ What do you think are some differences between countries?
- ★ Can you give a reason why many countries have become democracies?
- ★ Why do you think so many people from other countries want to live in America?

**LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY**

D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet by Elisa Grodin, Illustrated by Victor Juhasz

OBJECTIVE

Students understand the concept of democracy and how it applies to America.

MATERIALS

D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet -
Elisa Grodin

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

- ✓ Tell your students that they will be learning about democracy. Explain that a democracy is a government where all citizens have a voice.
- ✓ Let your students know that each letter of the alphabet is represented in this book by a word that has something to do with democracy. For example, *W* is for *George Washington*.
- ✓ Have your students guess what the different letters stand for. Don't reveal what they actually stand for until someone guesses correctly. Remind your students that all their guesses need to be about democracy in America.

ACTIVITY

- ✓ Play a memory game with your students. After reading them the book (you may want to read it for a second time before you play), ask your students to recall each page's key word.
- ✓ Go alphabetically through the book saying, *A was for... B was for...* letting your students finish the statements.
- ✓ Cover the key words on each page (so the students don't see it) and make sure you hold up the pictures for your students to see. The pictures on each page should jog their memories, but you can always give clues such as, No "D" is not for dog, "D" is for our type of government.
- ✓ Keep the book available in your classroom and encourage your students to look at it when they get a chance.
- ✓ Consider playing the memory game again after some time has passed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What do you think were some of the most important words discussed in the book? Why do you think those words are so important?*
- ★ *How would you describe a democracy?*
- ★ *How is America a democracy?*
- ★ *What can you do to make sure your voice is heard?*
- ★ *The last pages of the book say, "We Want You To Get Involved?" Involved in what? What do they mean?*

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: DEMOCRACY AND ME**

(45 minutes in class, additional time out of class)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn the characteristics of a democratic society and how they can improve where they live.

MATERIALS

Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy handout

GET READY

- ✓ Copy the *Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy* handout so you have a copy for each student or make a transparency of it for an overhead projector.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask students, *How many have heard of the word “democracy”? Does anyone know what it means? What other words do you think of when you hear “democracy”?* List your students’ ideas on the board.
- ✓ Read to your students the following definition: *A democracy is a society where the people are involved in making many of the decisions about what happens.*
- ✓ Ask students, *How do people in the United States help make decisions about the government, schools, laws, and other important aspects of our lives?* (Possible answers include attending public meetings, writing letters to public officials, running for public office, and serving on a local board. If students do not mention voting, make sure to tell them that it’s one of the major ways citizens help make decisions).

- ✓ Ask students, *Is democracy just for grown-ups? Does it have anything to do with kids?* Accept all responses. Then ask, *How many of you ride a bike? Wear pajamas? Use a local park? Drink water? Breathe the air?* Explain to your students that the laws made by our local, state, and federal governments determine what is acceptable and what isn’t with these and many other situations. The government affects most of our everyday activities, including the fact that students are required, at this moment, to be in school!
- ✓ Use the *Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy* handout on an overhead projector and ask students to identify the things that kids can do to participate in our democracy. Have a discussion with the class after completing the handout. Are your students surprised that they can contribute to our democracy in so many ways? While elementary school students are not old enough to vote, they can still influence how adults vote and otherwise contribute to improving society. (Instead of using an overhead projector, you can copy the handout for individuals or groups, depending on their reading abilities.)
- ✓ After completing the handout, ask your students to choose a class activity. (Have your students vote by ballot or by a show of hands.) The class should come up with a plan to carry out one of the ideas on the handout: recycling, donating food, etc.
- ✓ The class should carry out this plan and document it with photos and writings. The class can create a bulletin board showcasing the work they did.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: DEMOCRACY AND ME** (continued)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ★ *What is a democracy?*
- ★ *Can anyone share how they participate in our democracy?*
- ★ *Do you think we made a difference in our community? How?*
- ★ *Do you think it is our responsibility to help our community? Why?*
- ★ *What other ways will you be able to participate in our democracy when you are an adult?*



WAYS I CAN PARTICIPATE IN OUR DEMOCRACY

Directions: Circle the ideas listed below that are ways kids can help their community.

Picking up trash

Writing to an elected official

Following the laws

Voting in public elections

Listening to or reading the news

Donating money

Attending a public meeting

Talking to an adult about voting

Visiting someone who is lonely

Writing a letter to a newspaper

Talking to friends about a
community problem

Calling the mayor about a
community problem

Speaking at a public meeting

Distributing flyers

Raising money for a good cause
in the community

Making get well cards for
children in the hospital

Volunteering at a nursing home

Creating artwork that teaches

Donating food or clothing

Recycling

Can you think of any other ways kids can participate in democracy?

Write them here...

KIDS VOTING USA

K-2

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



INTRODUCTION TO THEME

The intent of this theme is for students to learn how to evaluate information and to intelligently form, communicate, and act on the decisions they make. The theme's activities fall under four main learning objectives:

- Students will learn how to gather and weigh information and form an opinion.
- Students will learn how to clearly and effectively communicate their position with others.
- Students will learn how to work together effectively.
- Students will consider how they can have an impact in their community.



GENERAL ACTIVITIES

CONCEPT 1: GATHERING AND WEIGHING INFORMATION

I Heard, I Think, I Know...	2
Making Inferences	3
It's News To Me	4

CONCEPT 2: COMMUNICATING YOUR POSITION

Robots	5
Spokespeople For Kids Voting USA	6

CONCEPT 3: WORKING TOGETHER

Zoo Animal Cages	7
Two On A Crayon	8
Match Community Helpers	9

CONCEPT 4: HAVING AN IMPACT

If Elected...	12
Postcards	14
Targeting Problems In My Community	15



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

Questions for Concept 1: Gathering and Weighing Information	16
Questions for Concept 2: Communicating Your Position	16
Questions for Concept 3: Working Together	16
Questions for Concept 4: Having an Impact	16



LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY

<i>Miss Rumphius</i> by Barbara Cooney	17
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CULMINATING ACTIVITY

What's The Problem?	18
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**I HEARD, I THINK, I KNOW...**

(30-45 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn how to form opinions and make good decisions.

MATERIALS

Magazines, books, newspapers, and/or access to the Internet

GET READY

- ✓ If your classroom is not equipped with the Internet, find a classroom/resource room that is.
- ✓ Make sure you have access to varied forms of media: newspapers, books, etc.

INSTRUCTIONS**Setting Up the Research**

- ✓ Tell students that a good decision is well thought out and based on information from many sources. Say, *Good decisions are based on information. What are good sources of information?* (Newspapers, the Internet, books, magazines, etc.) *These are great places for finding information on anything we want.*
- ✓ Ask students to brainstorm an issue or topic that impacts their lives and that they would like to know more about, i.e. the environment, education, etc. Tell them they can be specific: rainforest destruction, seat belts on school buses, etc.
- ✓ Vote to determine a subject for the class to research.

Conducting the Research

- ✓ Conduct research on the subject the class selects. Research the topic using: books, Internet sites, magazines, videos, etc.
- ✓ Share the research in its many forms with your students.
- ✓ Say, *Now that we have learned about _____, does anyone want to share how they feel about it (share an opinion)?*
- ✓ Listen to responses and encourage students to explain why they feel the way they do (prompt them to mention the research sources).
- ✓ In the case of an election, ask students to share why they made the decisions they have made.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How do we make good decisions?*
- ★ *Why do you think it is important to gather information from many different places?*
- ★ *Can you believe everything you hear and see? Why or why not?*

MORE!

Encourage students to bring in information on the subject as they see it in newspapers, etc. Create a bulletin board to document the information as it comes in.

**MAKING INFERENCES**

(30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn to make inferences from the information they are presented with.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Tell the class that you can learn a lot about a situation by the decisions people make and the actions they take.
- ✓ Tell the class that it is important to be aware of people's actions, especially those of our elected officials. Give the example of a politician who makes lots of promises to get elected but never delivers on them. In this case, actions speak louder than words.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell students that they are going to play a game similar to Charades. Explain the concept of Charades if they are not familiar with it. (*Charades is a game played with teams. An individual from one team "acts out" a phrase without speaking while their teammates try to guess what the phrase is. The objective is for your team to guess the phrase as quickly as possible.*)
- ✓ Tell students that some of them will act things out in front of the class without talking. The rest of the class will try to guess what the student is acting out.
- ✓ Choose student volunteers and give them specific actions to perform in front of the class. Choose actions that lead to rational conclusions, such as yawning = being tired.

- ✓ Give the students hints if they need help performing their assigned actions.
- ✓ Give each student about twenty seconds to act, and then have the class guess their action.
- ✓ Some other ideas for actions are:
smiling = being happy, shivering = being cold, wiping forehead = being hot, and so on.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How were you able to make correct guesses when everyone was acting silently?*
- ★ *Why is it important to look not only at what people say but also what they do?*
- ★ *Should you base your opinions on actions alone? Is that a smart decision, or is it better to pay attention to both what a person says and what they do?*
- ★ Give an example of a decision you made recently. Say, *What can you tell by the decision I made?*

MORE!

Have students come up with their own ideas to act out silently and have the class continue to guess what they are.

**IT'S NEWS TO ME**

(30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn how to distinguish the different parts of a newspaper.

MATERIALS

Two copies of a local or national newspaper

GET READY

- ✓ Obtain two copies of a local or national newspaper.
- ✓ Leave one newspaper intact and prepare to cut the other.
- ✓ Identify a few articles or advertisements from the newspaper you have selected to cut; you are trying to find examples of the different components of a newspaper. For example, locate and cut out an article from the sports section, an article from the news section, and also an advertisement.
- ✓ Photocopy these articles so that you have multiple sets of them. (You will be breaking your class up into groups of three or four so make sure to have a set of articles for each group.)
- ✓ Make labels for the different newspaper clippings. (For example, have one label say *Sports Article*, another *Advertisement*, and one *News Article*.) Make sure you have a set of labels for each group of students as well.
- ✓ If possible, laminate the labels and articles and/or advertisements.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have a discussion with your class about newspapers. Explain to your students why people read them. Also make sure you describe various newspaper components: advertisements, sports articles, news articles (local, national and international), travel articles, cooking articles, and so on.
- ✓ Using the newspaper you left intact, show your class an example for each section you discuss. For example, say, *This is an advertisement because it's about a product that's on sale. This is a sports article because it's about a baseball game.*
- ✓ Break your class up into small groups of three or four. Give each group the set of articles/advertisements you laminated as well as the labels.
- ✓ Have the groups figure out which article or advertisement fits which label.
- ✓ Go over the correct answers with your class and ask the groups to provide explanations for how they matched the clippings and labels.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What did you learn about a newspaper that you didn't know before?*
- ★ *Why is it important to understand what the different parts of a newspaper mean?*
- ★ *Why do we have newspapers?*

**ROBOTS**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn to communicate effectively with another person.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Tell the class that they are going to play a game that involves good communication.
- ✓ Inform the class that this activity will involve them moving around, but there will be no running.
- ✓ Arrange for as large a space as possible.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Help your students divide into pairs. Designate one student in each pair to be the robot and the other student to be the robot operator.
- ✓ Tell the robots that they will be moving around the room with their eyes closed. They will be directed by their operator and may only go in a straight line until their direction is changed by their partner.
- ✓ Tell the robot operators that they can give directions to the robots, but cannot touch them. For example, they can say, *Go slower, Turn left, Turn right, Turn around*, etc.
- ✓ Tell the robots that they should walk in place if they hit an obstacle or another robot. They should wait for directions from their operator before moving again.
- ✓ Give the pairs about 60 seconds to wander the room/space as described.
- ✓ Ring a bell or blow a whistle to stop all robot action. Have the robots tell the operators one thing they did well and one thing they could

do better next time. Then have the operators do the same thing, and tell the robots one thing they did well and one thing they could do better next time.

- ✓ Have your students try their roles again for an additional 60 seconds.
- ✓ Have the pairs discuss what worked better the second time.
- ✓ Next, have them swap roles: the operators take a turn at being the robot and the robots take a turn at being the operator.
- ✓ Repeat the sequence one more time as described above.
- ✓ Finally, ask the pairs to talk about what made a good robot and a good robot operator. After a few minutes, open up the discussion to the whole class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How did it feel to be the robot operator? Was it hard to communicate with the robots? What made a good operator in this game?*
- ★ *How did it feel to be a robot? Was it hard to take directions from the operator? What made a good robot in this game?*
- ★ *In real life, have you ever felt anything similar to this game? When was that? Why was it similar?*
- ★ *What are some characteristics of good communication?*
- ★ *Was this game hard or easy? Why do you feel that way?*

MORE!

Suggest that the students play the game during recess and at home. Have them ask any adults at home what it means to be a good communicator.

**SPOKESPEOPLE FOR KIDS VOTING USA**

(30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students advocate voting throughout their school and community.

MATERIALS

Materials vary depending on how your students advocate voting.

GET READY

- ✓ Tell your class that they have the opportunity to be spokespeople for Kids Voting USA. Inform them that they will be able to share their knowledge about voting and democracy with the school.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask, *What messages do you want to share with the rest of the school? How can you share your passion for voting and democracy with other students? How can you influence other people to vote?*
- ✓ Students may come up with their own messages as well as how to disseminate them, but you can mention these ideas as a start:
 - ✓ Make posters that celebrate democracy.
 - ✓ Make signs to encourage classes and students to participate in the election.
 - ✓ Bring in daily information for an election bulletin board.
 - ✓ Visit classrooms encouraging students to vote.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What was the message you communicated to the school? How did you communicate this message (signs, posters, etc.)?*
- ★ *Was it hard to convince people to vote? If yes, what made it so hard?*
- ★ *How were you best able to communicate your message to the other students? Do you think you were effective in sharing your message?*

**ZOO ANIMAL CAGES**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn to cooperate while creating edible zoo animal cages.

MATERIALS

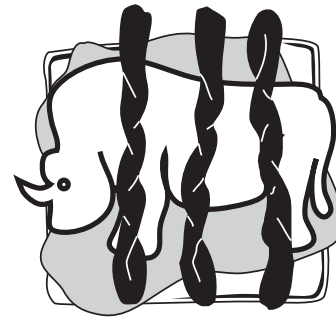
1 half of a graham cracker per child;
1 container (more depending on class size) of white frosting; 1 animal cracker per child; 3 licorice/Twizzler® pieces per child; plastic knives for spreading frosting

GET READY

- ✓ Split your students up into groups of four.
- ✓ Make sure there are enough graham crackers, white frosting, animal crackers, and licorice/Twizzler® pieces per child.
- ✓ Have each child wash their hands extremely well, as they will all be handling food.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Tell your students that they will be making treats they can eat, though they must work together in their groups to make it happen.
- ✓ Assign each student in each group to be in charge of one item for creating zoo animal cages. One child will receive all of the graham crackers, one will have the frosting, one will have the animal crackers, and the other will be in charge of the licorice/Twizzlers®.
- ✓ Model for your students how to create the zoo animal cages. First, lay a half of a graham cracker flat. Next, spread the frosting on a graham cracker. Then, place an animal cracker on top of the frosting. Finally, place three pieces of licorice or three Twizzlers® vertically along the graham cracker as the animal cage's bars.



- ✓ Give the groups a minute to discuss how they will build the zoo animal cages. They should determine that the student with the graham crackers needs to give everyone in their group a graham cracker. Then, they should determine that the person with frosting should next distribute a large clump of frosting on each graham cracker and that each group member should spread the frosting on their cracker with their plastic knife. They should determine that the person holding the animal crackers should then distribute them to his/her group members. Lastly, they should determine that the person with the licorice/Twizzlers® should give three pieces to each group member to complete the cages.
- ✓ Have your students build their zoo animal cage treats. Confirm that each group is working cooperatively.
- ✓ When the class has completed their zoo cages, have your students walk around the room to see the other groups' zoo animal cages.
- ✓ Finally, allow your students to eat their zoo animal cages.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What was the best part about making the zoo animal cages?*
- ★ *What was the most difficult part about making the zoo animal cages?*
- ★ *Was it hard working in a group to create your cages? Why or why not?*

**TWO ON A CRAYON**

(10-15 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn to cooperate and work together.

MATERIALS

Construction paper and drawing materials;
a music playing device

GET READY

- ✓ Help the students divide into pairs.
- ✓ Gather crayons and construction paper.
- ✓ Setup a music source for the activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Give each pair a crayon and a piece of white construction paper.
- ✓ Explain that both partners will hold the crayon simultaneously and draw a picture together while a three or four minute song is played in the background. Tell the students that pairs cannot decide what picture to draw before the activity nor can they talk while they draw. This exercise is about silent cooperation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Did you enjoy working together?*
- ★ *Was cooperating difficult? Why or why not?*
- ★ *Did the cooperation produce anything that surprised you?*
- ★ *How did you decide who would lead and who would follow?*
- ★ *Was it hard to lead? To follow? Do you think it is sometimes hard for adults in our country to be our leaders? How?*

MORE!

Now that the class is familiar with the activity, you can have them try the exercise again (same pairs or different).

From *Tribes, A New Way of Learning Together*, by Jeanne Gibbs, CenterSource, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

**MATCH COMMUNITY HELPERS**

(15-20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students work together to match community helpers (policeman, bus driver, garbage man, etc.) to the tools they use to do their jobs (police badge, garbage can, school bus, etc.).

MATERIALS

Match Community Helpers handout (contains Helpers and Tools cards)

GET READY

- ✓ Duplicate the Helpers and Tools cards onto card stock.
- ✓ Cut the cards so that you have 10 Community Helper cards and 10 Tool cards.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Hold up each card and say aloud what the picture shows: “gavel,” “fire fighter,” etc. Have your students repeat after you.
- ✓ As you hold up and name the cards, ask the children what each worker does and how the tools are used: “What does a judge do?” “What do you do with the badge?”
- ✓ Hand one card to each student.
- ✓ Each child will seek the student with the card that matches his/hers.
- ✓ Encourage the children to talk out loud to each other about mismatches, as they look for their matches: “No, the bus driver doesn’t use the garbage can.”
- ✓ When all the matches are made, ask the pairs to show and explain their matches: “The fire fighter uses the fire hose to put out fires.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *You had to cooperate to match the cards. Was it difficult to work together?*
- ★ *How can you make the jobs of the community helpers easier? What can you do to help the bus driver? the garbage worker? the police officer? etc.*
- ★ *What do you do to be a community helper?*
- ★ *Is there anything else you can do to be a community helper?*

MORE!

Have your students look for pictures in the newspaper that show community helpers.



MATCH COMMUNITY HELPERS

MATCH COMMUNITY HELPERS

CONSTRUCTION WORKER 		MAYOR 	
LIBRARIAN 		FIREMAN 	
BUS DRIVER 		DOCTOR 	



MATCH COMMUNITY HELPERS

JUDGE 		SANITATION WORKER 	
POLICE OFFICER 		MAIL CARRIER 	

**IF ELECTED...**

(20-30 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students write a suggestion for their community on a “campaign button” which also acts as a reminder for parents and guardians to vote.

MATERIALS

If Elected... handout; tape; markers, colored pencils, crayons, etc.

GET READY

- ✓ Duplicate *If Elected...* Buttons.
- ✓ Gather colored pencils, marking pens, etc. for decorating the buttons.
- ✓ This activity works best close to an election, preferably a mayoral election, but it is not essential.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say, *Let's pretend that each one of you is a candidate for mayor, and you need to do one important thing for our community. What would that be?* (Possible student responses: make the community cleaner, create more parks, support the police, and so on.)
- ✓ Tell students to write or draw their idea on the button handout. Remind your students to think of an improvement that would benefit the entire community. (Students can draw a picture of what they would do if they do not have a strong ability to write.)
- ✓ Give students time to color and cut out the buttons as well as to write their ideas. Make adhesive tape “hinges” to attach the buttons to their shirts.

- ✓ Have students share their suggestions with the class by forming an “Inside Outside Circle” to read each other’s ideas. (It also makes good reading practice.) Children form two concentric circles and turn to face each other. After reading the partners’ buttons, one circle moves clockwise to the next person and the new pairs read each others’ buttons. Proceed until perhaps five pairs have shared.

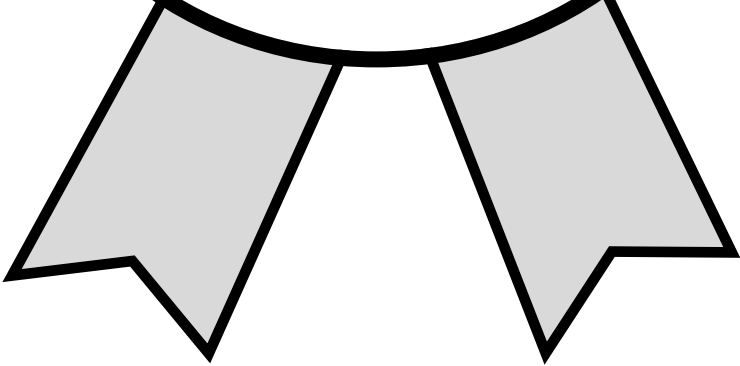
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What were some of your suggestions? Who would benefit from these improvements?*
- ★ *Is there a way that you can help your suggestion come true? What can you do?*
- ★ *How might voting make your suggestions for our town a reality?*



IF ELECTED...

IF ELECTED...

CAMPAIGN BUTTON
<div><p>IF ELECTED...</p><hr/><hr/><hr/><hr/><hr/><hr/><hr/></div> 

**POSTCARDS**

(20 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students prepare postcards to send to their parents or guardians.

MATERIALS

Sheets of cardstock; crayons, markers, paper cutter, scissors

GET READY

- ✓ Prepare “postcards” by cutting sheets of cardstock in half on the paper cutter or with scissors.
- ✓ Gather crayons and markers.
- ✓ Bring in some stamps to show students how often political figures are used. (They may choose to draw a president on their own “stamps” too.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Say, *We receive reminders in the mail to visit the dentist or to meet at a restaurant for a birthday treat. Today, you are going to create a reminder about an upcoming election or an issue important to your family.*
- ✓ Have your students draw a picture and write a message about the election or issue on one side of their “postcard.” The message can be as simple as “Vote!” or “Recycle!” or they can write a longer message. Tell them to draw a stamp on the other side, to address it to the recipient of the postcard: “Mom” “Dad” “Tom” etc., and to sign or write their own name as well.
- ✓ Remind students to deliver their postcard when they get home.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What are other ways we can send reminders to adults? (Letter, e-mails)*
- ★ *How can we remind other students at our school to vote, recycle, etc.?*
- ★ *How are we helping our town if we deliver our cards and messages?*

**TARGETING PROBLEMS IN MY COMMUNITY**

(30-45 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students learn about different problems in the local community, choose one, and brainstorm ways they can make a difference.

MATERIALS

No materials are necessary for this activity.

GET READY

- ✓ Arrange to have someone from the community come to your class and speak about local community needs and problems.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ For homework one night, ask students to talk to their parents/guardians about what they think are the most important community needs and/or problems. Have students share their findings with the class while you add them to a list on the board. Then have your students come up with any additional ideas to add to the board.
- ✓ The next day, have someone from the community come to your class to speak about local community needs and problems. This could be a public official such as the mayor or a city council member or someone who works for an umbrella social service organization such as United Way. Ask the speaker to talk with the class about current community problems. Encourage your students to ask questions so they can learn how/why the problems originated and what they can do to help.

- ✓ Have each student select what they think is the most important problem. Have them consider:
 - a) What issue interested me the most?,
 - b) What issue matters the most to me, my neighborhood, and my community?
 - c) What could I do to help solve this problem?
- ✓ Have your students share their problems and solutions with the class. For example, if a student selects too much trash in the community as a problem, some solutions include recycling, encouraging others to not litter, and throwing away trash in parks and playgrounds.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What are some of our community's needs and problems?*
- ★ *When have you noticed some of these problems in our community?*
- ★ *What are some solutions to these problems? Why do you think these are good solutions?*
- ★ *What are some of the sources of these problems? How do you think they started?*
- ★ *What can we do as individuals to help prevent these problems?*
- ★ *What can we do as a class to help prevent these problems?*

MORE!

Have your students share things they do to address community problems. Encourage them to make class announcements when they do something to help the community.



OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

GATHERING AND WEIGHING INFORMATION

- ★ Why is information important?
- ★ What are sources of information?
- ★ Is everything you hear true?
- ★ How do you decide if something is true?
- ★ What is a decision?
- ★ How do you make decisions?
- ★ What makes some decisions good and other ones bad?
- ★ Tell me about a decision you have made? Do you think it was a good decision, why or why not?

COMMUNICATING YOUR POSITION

- ★ Have you ever told anyone how you felt about something that was important to you?
- ★ Is it always easy to say how you feel?
- ★ What do you think is a good way to share an opinion with someone else?
- ★ Do people always agree with you?
- ★ What do you do when someone disagrees with you?
- ★ Do you know what it means to communicate?
- ★ What makes a good communicator?

WORKING TOGETHER

- ★ What does it mean to work well with others?
- ★ Is it always easy to work with others?
- ★ What can be difficult about working with others?
- ★ What does it mean to be a good listener?
- ★ Can it be fun to work with other people? How?
- ★ Is there a time when you had to work with other people? How did it go?
- ★ What advice would you give someone who needs to work with other people?

HAVING AN IMPACT

- ★ What is a community?
- ★ Are there any problems in your community?
- ★ Do you think adults are the only people that make a difference in your community? Why or why not?
- ★ Are there things that you can do to help your community? What are some ideas?
- ★ Do you think it would be hard to create change in your community? If so, what do you think would be hard about it?
- ★ Was there a time you did something good for your community? Please tell me about it.

**LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY***Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney**OBJECTIVE**

Students learn what it means to create positive change in their community.

MATERIALS

Miss Rumphius - Barbara Cooney

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

- ✓ Take your students on a “picture walk.” Turn from page to page through the book, asking your students what they see and what they think is happening in the story.
- ✓ After going through the book, have your students make predictions about the story’s plot. Ask, *What do you think this book is about? Who do you think the main character in the book is? Did you see anything that looked familiar? Did you see anything that looked confusing?*
- ✓ Read *Miss Rumphius* and make sure to reference the students’ predictions during and after reading it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why do you think Alice’s grandfather told her that she needed to do something to make the world more beautiful?*
- ★ *Where did Miss Rumphius get the idea to spread flower seeds everywhere?*
- ★ *What difference did it make that Miss Rumphius had spread the seeds?*
- ★ *People called her crazy for spreading the seeds around town. How does that make you feel? Why?*
- ★ *Is it always easy to do good things? What can make it difficult?*

- ★ *Do you think the flowers will go away if Miss Rumphius does not continue to plant them? Who else could spread the seeds?*
- ★ *Think about Miss Rumphius. Can one person’s good intentions and actions make a difference?*
- ★ *What can you do to make your community a better place to live?*

ACTIVITY

- ✓ Have your students think of ways they could make their community a better place to live.
- ✓ Keep track of these ideas by writing them on the board.
- ✓ Tell your students to draw a picture that represents what they can do to improve their community. Remind them of how Miss Rumphius made her town more beautiful.
- ✓ Have students share their pictures with the class and explain the change they would bring to the community.
- ✓ As a class, decide on one thing you can do to improve your town, school, or even your classroom community.
- ✓ Carry out this project and invite parents and community members to come and celebrate it.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?**

(45-60 minutes in class; time varies out of class)

OBJECTIVE

Students choose and complete a service activity designed to address a local community problem.

MATERIALS

Depends on the service project selected

GET READY

- ✓ Prepare newspaper articles that discuss community problems: trash, hunger, etc.
- ✓ Consider things that will determine the nature of the service-learning project: money, transportation, supervision, etc.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have your class brainstorm problems in the community. You may want to bring in a local newspaper, or newspaper articles, and read sections of it to your class.
- ✓ Keep track of the problems mentioned by your class by writing them on the board.
- ✓ Tell your class that they are going to address one of the problems, but they first need to choose a problem. Have them select the problem by a show of hands or a similar democratic process.
- ✓ Now that you have a problem for your class to address, ask your students to come up with possible solutions to the problem. (These ideas represent possible service projects.) List these ideas on the board.
- ✓ In order to identify the correct project for your class, encourage your students to consider the following questions:
 - ✓ How much time do we have for the service activity?

- ✓ What kinds of support do we need (money, transportation, adult supervision) and where can we find this support?
- ✓ Which ideas are likely to have the greatest impact on the problem?
- ✓ Which ideas do we most want to do?

Note: It is important as the teacher that you "veto" any ideas that the students are advocating but that you find unacceptable or unreasonable. Be sure to explain to the students why that idea will not be included in the final list.

- ✓ Vote on a service project idea for the class to complete. (If you and your students are ambitious and have the time, you could choose more than one.)
- ✓ Make arrangements to carry out the project, including contacting the people and/or organizations needed for its success. Allow enough time for your class to complete the project.
- ✓ After completing the service project, have students reflect on their experience in writing or discussion.
- ✓ To conclude the experience, celebrate students' efforts to make a difference. This could be as simple as a popcorn party, extra recess, or a pizza picnic to as involved as a public event in the community with guest speakers and student awards.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?** (continued)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ★ *Was it hard to come up with a service project for the class? Why or why not?*
- ★ *What was hard, easy, fun or difficult about the service experience?*
- ★ *Did the class make a difference?*
- ★ *Were we able to influence public opinion regarding the problem?*
- ★ *What did we learn from this experience and how could we apply that learning to future efforts to improve our community?*

MORE!

If the service idea chosen didn't involve influencing public opinion about the issue, you might also want to include one of the following activities:

- ✓ Writing a letter to the editor or a public official in the community about the problem
- ✓ Organizing a public display with facts, artwork, and any other information you can think of