

## 7th Grade Guide for Program Curriculum

*NOTE: some lesson plans require registration/login (free to educators)*

**SS.7.16 - Analyzing individual and group perspectives is essential to understanding historic and contemporary issues. Opportunities for civic engagement exist for students to connect real-world issues and events to classroom learning.**

Making policy decisions is complicated; best practices consider all perspectives, solutions, and outcomes. The lessons provided for this standard have students make these decisions. In doing so, students will learn about the complexities of decision-making in our civics and public policy realms.

CORE: County Solutions Civic Action Plan, Voting In Congress

- County Solutions is a lesson-based civic action project you can do with your students right in the classroom! The project is broken down into nine steps, with one lesson per step. Students examine the broad context of their issues—including the role of the county and other levels of government—and focus on bringing about local change using strategies tailored to their individual issues. When you've finished the unit, students will have a completed action plan to resolve a community issue.
  - Step 1: We've Got Issues - In the first of nine steps, students explore two county issues they have chosen. They vote to decide which issue the class will focus on for its "County Solutions" project.
  - Step 2: The News and You - Having chosen an issue for the project, students analyze two news articles about the issue. They apply the "5W + H" method to learn how to gather information from a news article. Using what they learn, they describe the current state of the chosen issue.
  - Step 3: Who You Gonna Call? - To begin thinking about possible solutions for the issue they read about in Step Two, students learn about the difference between the individual, group, and government action. They analyze examples, then apply what they've learned by suggesting ways each type of actor could address the class's chosen issue.
  - Step 4: Working With Websites - To increase their knowledge about both the chosen issue and the three types of actors they studied in Step Three, students examine three websites of governmental and non-governmental organizations involved with the chosen issue. They apply the "5W + H" method in order to learn how to navigate and gather information from a website. At the same time, they record and analyze new information about the class's chosen issue.
  - Step 5: All About Public Policy - Having built a foundation of knowledge about the chosen issue in Steps One through Four, students now learn the term "public policy." Students identify government action and regulation as the two main ways the government works to solve problems. They analyze examples and evaluate the situations in which action and regulation are appropriate.
  - Step 6: Real-World Policies - Building on the concepts of public policy, government action, and regulation from Step Five, students analyze real-world

examples of government actions and regulations. Students get a taste of the wide variety of public policies that exist, and they learn how to evaluate a public policy idea for benefits and limitations.

- **Step 7: Brainstorm a-Brewin!** - Armed with knowledge about the chosen issue and about how public policy works from Steps One through Six, students brainstorm a public policy solution for the issue the class has been studying. Students use a “Thinking CAPS” method of organized brainstorming.
- **Step 8: Positions, Please!** - Students summarize their research and their proposed solution in one coherent document that describes what the issue is, what’s being done, and how the proposed public policy will help solve the problem.
- **Step 9: Action Campaign** - Now that the research is done and students have articulated a proposed public policy solution for the chosen issue, they learn how to gather support. Students learn 12 different campaign and publicity strategies, then apply what they’ve learned by creating publicity materials to promote the class’s public policy solution. This lesson may be done as a fictional exercise or to kick off a real-life campaign.
- **Voting in Congress** - students will identify the constitutional powers of Congress, describe factors that members of Congress consider when deciding how to vote on a bill, and simulate the decision making process of voting as a member of Congress

SUPPLEMENTAL: Progressive City Planners, Supreme Court Nominations, Why Do We Have A House And Senate, Anyway?, Social Media for Social Action

- **Progressive City Planners** - a two class period lesson where students will create their own imaginary cities, deciding where to place amenities such as parks and libraries, as well drawbacks such as environmental hazards. Then they will compare their cities to the real world.
- **Supreme Court Nominations** - students will learn what factors members of Congress consider when deciding whether to vote for a bill, including the powers given to Congress by the Constitution, what a member's constituents want, his or her political party's position, and the member's personal views. Students simulate the decision making process using hypothetical bills based on real-life issues.
- **Why Do We Have A House And Senate, Anyway?** - Students learn why there are two houses of Congress and discover how a bicameral legislature ensures that all states have a voice in bills. Together, the class creates a school cell phone policy and experiments with different voting groups that demonstrate why the bicameral compromise was necessary.
- **Social Media for Social Action** - students will explore reasons for engaging in digital activism, understand that there are different ways to engage in social activism online, and analyze and evaluate pros and cons of digital activism
- **Understanding Polling** - Polls inundate students on social media and in the news, particularly during election season. The Poll Dance will introduce students to important aspects of valid polling. After viewing The Poll Dance, students will examine important aspects of valid polling and evaluate three polls.