



## Lesson 1: A Different Kind of Government Course

### Overview

This lesson introduces the Civic Action Project (CAP) as a practicum for their government course. To help students understand CAP's rationale, students first discuss why government is a required course and then brainstorm the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions of effective, productive citizens. Finally, students are introduced to the CAP assignment of addressing a problem or issue through civic actions.

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the basic responsibilities and expectations of every citizen.
- Brainstorm traits of effective citizenship in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions.
- Decide on and support their opinion of the most important elements of effective citizenship in each of these areas.

### Preparation & Materials

- Markers and eight sheets of chart paper. Title each sheet with one of the following words: Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Actions. (You will have two sets with the same titles.)
- If you would prefer to have only one completed Citizenship Brainstorm per class rather than two, consider compiling responses. Or have students do the brainstorm in pairs or small groups then transcribe their responses on a larger class chart.
- Throughout the CAP program, you will use the Citizenship Brainstorm charts as students identify knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions they are learning.

## Procedure

### I. Focus Discussion

A. Ask students: Since you were in elementary school, you have been required to take classes to ensure that when you graduate, you are able to read and write. Why?

B. Explain that nearly every state in the nation requires students to take a government course. Ask students to work with those around them (groups of 2–4) to talk about the possible reasons why government is a required course and ask them to jot down their best three answers.

Provide an opportunity for the groups to share their responses. Answers might include:

- Know what government does, how it works
- Learn how to participate in government
- Learn why government is important
- Understand why we have government
- To prepare them for college
- To learn how to think critically
- To be prepared to participate in American democracy

Acknowledge students' responses. Remind them that our form of democracy depends on "We, the people" and briefly discuss the importance of citizen participation and the benefits of having an informed and engaged citizenry.

### II. Citizenship Brainstorm

A. Explain that the goal of this government course is to ensure that students are ready to go into society and be effective and productive citizens. Set up the brainstorm: Let's think about what effective citizens look like:

- (1) What do they **know**?
- (2) What do they know how to do—what **skills** do they have?
- (3) What **attitudes** do they have?
- (4) What **actions** do they take?

B. Divide students into eight groups. Each group will conduct a brainstorm on the four questions (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Actions).

Give each group one of the pre-labeled charts and explain:

- Groups will have time to brainstorm the topic on the chart in front of them.
- Charts will rotate every 3–5 minutes so that each group has a chance to add its ideas to each category. (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Actions)

C. When sheets come back to the original authors, ask each group to:

- Review all of the additions that the other groups made.
- Reach consensus in choosing three items that they think are most important to take away with them from this government course.
- Mark the three items with a dot.

Provide an opportunity for each group to state and provide a rationale for its top-three choices. Explain that you'll be keeping these charts for students to refer to throughout the course and they will likely add more items along the way.

### **III. Closing Discussion**

Key points:

- All of us are going to work toward gaining the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions listed on the charts.
- Think of this government course as a practicum—a place where we get to practice the “stuff” that effective, productive citizens do.
- You are going to address a real issue through “civic actions.” We'll talk more about what “civic actions” are, but for now, start thinking about issues or problems you might want to address.