

Lesson 8: Taking a Position on a Public Issue Relating to the U.S. Constitution

Big Ideas of the Lesson

- It is important for citizens to make informed decisions about public issues.
- To make informed decisions, citizens need to identify factual and definitional questions related to public issues.
- To make informed decisions, citizens need to analyze data and information related to public issues.
- To make informed decisions, citizens need to examine different points of views on public issues.
- To make informed decisions, citizens need to consider how core democratic values relate to public issues.
- After making an informed decision on an issue citizens need to support their position with a reasoned argument.

Lesson Abstract:

In this lesson, students use all the information they have gathered in the previous lesson on the public issue of mandatory school uniforms to help them make an informed decision on the issue. Then, they write a short essay expressing their opinion on the issue and justifying their position with a reasoned argument.

Content Expectations

- 5 – P3.1.1: Identify contemporary public issues related to the United States Constitution and their related factual, definitional, and ethical questions.
- 5 – P3.1.2: Use graphic data and other sources to analyze information about a contemporary public issue related to the United States Constitution and evaluate alternative resolutions.
- 5 – P3.1.3: Give examples of how conflicts over core democratic values lead people to differ on contemporary constitutional issues in the United States.
- 5 – P3.3.1: Compose a short essay expressing a position on a contemporary public policy issue related to the Constitution and justify the position with a reasoned argument.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects:

- W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.

- b. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
- c. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically).
- d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

Key Concepts

Bill of Rights
public issue
U.S. Constitution

Instructional Resources

Equipment/Manipulative

Overhead projector or document camera/projector

Teacher Resource

Egbo, Carol. *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 8)*. Teacher-made material. Michigan Citizenship Collaborative, 2012.

Lesson Sequence

1. Using the lesson graphic organizer, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 8)*, review the process used to make informed decisions on public issues.
2. Briefly review definitional and factual issues related to the public issue of mandatory school uniforms. Then, have students gather all of the information on the issue, which they collected in Lesson 7. Note that this includes the Core Democratic Value chart, the Data Sheets, and the “In Favor and Against” Information Sheet.
3. Explain to students that they are going to write a short essay stating their position on this issue and giving reasons for their position. Review briefly with students the necessity to consider core democratic values, data relating to the problem, and how all of these may apply to both sides of the public issue question.
4. Display “Writing Plan”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 8)*, and provide each student with a copy. Review the plan with students and instruct them to complete the plan. Review the plans prior to the beginning of the first draft. Next, instruct students to write their essays, using their plan as a guide.
5. When students have completed their short essays, have them trade essays with a partner. Give each student a copy of the “Essay Review”, located in the *Supplemental Materials (Unit 7, Lesson 8)*. Have students read their partner’s essay and then complete the Review Sheet. After students have completed the sheets, have each student return the Review Sheet and the essay back to their partner.
6. Provide time for students to revise and edit their essays based on their partner’s suggestions. Have all or selected students read their essays out loud. In addition, you may wish to share students’ essays with another class or post them as a classroom display.

Assessment

The short essay in which students take a position on a public issue and give reasons for their position serves as the assessment for this lesson.