

## ADDRESSING STATE AND LOCAL PROBLEMS

**SS.7.CG.2.10** Explain the process for citizens to address a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue and determining a course of action.

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## 2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.2.12
  - Changed from “~~Develop a plan to resolve~~ a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue, and determining a course of action.” to “Explain the process for citizens to address a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue and determining a course of action.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
  - Changed from “Develop” to “Explain”
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
  - Changed from “Students will identify appropriate government agencies to address state or local problems.” to “Students will identify appropriate government agencies to address local or state problems.”
  - Changed from “Students will analyze public policy alternatives to resolve state and local problems.” to “Students will analyze public policy alternatives to resolve local or state problems.”
  - Deletion of “Students will compare public policy solutions and private community service solutions.”
- Vocabulary Changes
  - No changes

## Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

**This section addresses the following topics:**

1. The Role of Citizens in Addressing Issues at the State and Local Levels of Government
2. Tools Available to Citizens to Effect Change in State and Local Public Policy

### 1. The Role of Citizens in Addressing Issues at the State and Local Levels of Government

Citizens play a central role in setting public policy at all levels of government. *Consent of the governed* in a constitutional republic requires active and consistent participation of citizens to make their feelings and priorities known to the representatives elected to govern. Oftentimes, citizens pay more attention to national government policies and participate in elections for national offices. However, most authority for setting the public policies that affect citizens' everyday lives is reserved to state and local government agencies. This is a result of the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as well as the practice of federalism.

While the national government has enumerated powers that impact many areas of public policy, the policies that most directly affect the day-to-day lives of citizens are directed to a large degree by government at the state and local levels. These policies may be in the areas of education, emergency services, infrastructure, parks and recreation, taxes, and more. Various local and state agencies are tasked with identifying issues/problems, developing solutions, and setting policies of implementation. While voting is perhaps the most basic and central act of citizenship, the voting booth is simply where citizen participation begins rather than ends. Active citizenship requires that citizens continually work to stay informed and involved. Our constitutional republic relies on citizens to engage in civil discourse with their elected representatives, providing feedback and ideas on how to best address issues of importance to them. It is essential for citizens to understand the powers and responsibilities of every level of government to ensure they are interacting with the correct level to address an issue.

### 2. Tools Available to Citizens to Effect Change in State and Local Public Policy

Beyond the responsibility for selecting public officials who will represent their interests in government, citizens possess a number of tools at their disposal to make their voices heard on issues of importance. Many of these tools are also protected rights, as stated in the First Amendment. They include:

- A. **Attending/Speaking At Civic Meetings:** Civic meetings are ways for citizens to be active participants in their government. Examples of formal civic meetings could include school board meetings, city council meetings, or public legislative hearings. Interest groups, political parties, candidates for public office, religious organizations, the media, and public officials will also hold civic meetings in order to inform and learn from the public.
- B. **Petitioning Government:** Petitioning government includes the right of individuals to come together with others and collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend their common interests. This includes the right to peaceably assemble in public places and the right to join an association. People are protected when they bring to the government's attention their unresolved concerns, provide information to political leaders about unpopular policies and issues, and expose government misconduct. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that regulation of assembly may not be used to stifle dissent; unpopular groups may not be prevented from gathering based on the nature of the group's message.

## Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What steps can citizens take to address problems at the state or local level?		
BENCHMARK		
<b>SS.7.CG.2.10</b> Explain the process for citizens to address a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue and determining a course of action.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will explain the process for citizens to address a state or local problem by identifying a state or local issue of interest to them, researching public policy alternatives, identifying the appropriate government agency to address the issue, and determining a course of action.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will identify the appropriate level of government to resolve specific problems.</li> <li>Students will identify appropriate government agencies to address local or state problems.</li> <li>Students will analyze public policy alternatives to resolve local and state problems.</li> </ul>		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>government agency, local government, public policy, state government</li> </ul>		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Reading complex text	Collaborative discussion	Project-based learning
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How Can I Make A Difference? slide</li> <li>Citizenship and Public Policy: An Introduction reading</li> <li>Public Policy Brainstorming Activity</li> <li>Student digital device</li> <li>State of Florida Laws website (external link)</li> <li>Local government websites (external link)</li> <li>Student Civic Leadership Award (optional)</li> </ul>		
B.E.S.T. STANDARDS		

- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.7.C.2- Present information orally, in a logical sequence, emphasizing key points that support the central idea.
- ELA.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

## Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Begin class by projecting the “How Can I Make A Difference?” slide.</li> <li>2. Have students brainstorm, on separate paper or in a notebook, policies/rules/laws that they think would be a positive benefit to society if they were created or changed. Students should also include <i>why</i> they think this change will be positive.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> Make sure to explain to students that while all slightly different, the terms ‘policies’, ‘rules’, and ‘laws’ will be used interchangeably in this lesson.</li> <li>3. Allow students several moments to work, circulating the room to monitor for engagement while they brainstorm.</li> <li>4. Solicit responses and allow students to share out and explain what policy/rule/law they would change and why they think it would benefit society.</li> <li>5. Ask students to brainstorm all the people who make the policies, rules, and laws that impact their lives and communities.</li> <li>6. Ask students to share out their responses, which may include: parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, the school board, the city council, the state legislature, Congress, and others. Lead them to an understanding that the individuals who make the policies, rules, and laws that impact their lives and communities come from all three levels of government: national, state, and local.</li> <li>7. Ask students: Of the three levels of government, which one(s) impact your daily life the most? (state and local)  <b>Teacher Note:</b> If you have previously taught SS.7.CG.3.13, this may be used as a review. If not, it could serve as an introduction to levels of government.</li> <li>8. Ask students: If a citizen feels like there is a problem/issue in the nation, their state, or their local community, what are some ways they may be able to responsibly bring attention to the issue? How might they become involved in resolving the problem/issue?  <b>Teacher Note:</b> If you have previously taught SS.7.CG.2.2, this may be used as a review. If not, it could serve as an introduction to responsibilities of citizenship.</li> <li>9. As you solicit responses, lead students to the understanding that citizens can impact policy change by voting and electing officials that agree with their stance, volunteering with government or non-government agencies who are working to address that issue/problem, petition the government, speak at civic meetings, peaceably assemble, etc.</li> <li>10. Explain to students that in this lesson, they will learn more about the exact processes that citizens can follow to address state or local problems.</li> <li>11. Pass out the “Citizenship and Public Policy: An Introduction” reading.</li> <li>12. Complete the reading as a class, either having students take turns reading or reading it to them. Model text-marking strategies as you go.</li> <li>13. Split students into pairs and ensure they have access to a digital device.</li> <li>14. Distribute the “Public Policy Brainstorming Activity.”</li> <li>15. Explain to students that with their partner, they will work through the steps a citizen would take to address a local or state problem.</li> <li>16. Instruct students to brainstorm a list of local and/or state problems that they find important. They may reference their notes from the opening activity. Their list should be recorded in box 1 of their “Public Policy Brainstorming Activity” paper.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> If students struggle to brainstorm problems, you could have them examine local and state online news publications for ideas. You may also just assign pairs a predetermined local/state problem if preferred.</li> </ol>

	<p>17. Once a set amount of brainstorming time has passed, instruct pairs that they must now choose ONE problem/issue from their list for the remainder of the activity. Provide students a few moments to do so, having them record their choice in box 2.</p> <p>18. Once all pairs have selected one issue/problem, instruct them to work on boxes 3 and 4. They will explain why this is an issue/problem worth addressing in box 3, and they will use their digital device to begin researching what rules/policies/laws already exist surrounding their chosen topic.</p> <p><b>Teacher Note:</b> You will want to provide them with a list of recommended websites to use for research (“<a href="#">State of Florida Laws</a>”; local sites will vary). Ensure they record their research sources in box 15.</p> <p>19. While students work, circulate the room to monitor for engagement and understanding, checking in with each group at least once to understand the issue they have chosen and help ensure they are researching in the right areas.</p>
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DAY 2	<p><b>Planning Note:</b> Depending on the dynamics of your class, and how much you are requiring students to write, completing this portion of the activity may take two class days and not one.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have students return to their pairs from the previous day and take back out their digital devices and “Public Policy Brainstorming Activity”.</li> <li>2. Go around the room quickly, and have each pair share the issue/problem they have chosen to focus on with the rest of the class.</li> <li>3. Explain that today, they will continue to work on the activity by examining possible solutions to address their chosen problem. They will need to figure out appropriate government agencies to get involved and research public policy alternatives in order to determine the best course of action in the end.</li> <li>4. Continue to have students research and work with their partners. By the end of the day, they should have completed all remaining boxes.</li> <li>5. While students work, circulate the room to monitor for engagement and understanding, checking in with each group at least once.</li> <li>6. If students finish with any time remaining in class, have them read over their answers one more time in order to prepare to share with the class tomorrow.</li> </ol>
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Once again, have students return to their pairs from the previous days and take back out their “Public Policy Brainstorming Activity”.</li> <li>2. Explain to students that today, each pair is going to take a turn explaining to the class the process they plan to take to address their chosen state/local problem.</li> <li>3. Call on one pair at a time to come to the front of the classroom to share. For each pair, ask the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What problem did you identify?</li> <li>■ Is this a state or local problem?</li> <li>■ What is your proposed solution?</li> <li>■ What alternative policy solutions exist? Why is yours the best?</li> <li>■ What individuals and/or government agencies will you need to work with to address your problem and implement your solution?</li> <li>■ What is your plan for bringing this problem and your proposed solution to their attention?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
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4. Continue until all pairs have shared.

**Teacher Note:** These are not intended to be long, formal, planned presentations but just a quick way for you to reinforce components of the benchmark using a variety of examples.

5. Optional: At the end of the class, have students vote on whose public policy action plan they liked the best and present that pair with the “Student Civic Leadership Award”.

**Enrichment Suggestion:** For the portion where students are sharing their “Public Policy Brainstorming Activity” with the class, you could invite outside guests to hear the student’s proposals. Guests could include individuals who the students may be referencing, such as: the school principal, a school board member, a city councilperson, their state representative, etc. Who knows...maybe they will even spark actual policy change!

## Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
<b>government agency</b>	a permanent or semi-permanent organization within a national, state, or local government
<b>local government</b>	within the United States, the elected government administration at any level below that of state or territory, usually overseeing a county, city, town, or similar
<b>public policy</b>	a system of laws, regulations, practices, and priorities concerning a given topic set and funded by elected leaders and/or government agency
<b>state government</b>	within the United States, the elected government administration over any of the 50 states



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
<a href="#">Civics 360 Resources</a>  Florida Department of Education’s Civic Literacy Reading List <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• N/A</li></ul>



ANSWER KEYS
N/A

SOURCES
Lesson materials adapted from and inspired by handouts/worksheets used as part of the Civic Action Project from the Constitutional Rights Foundation: <a href="https://www.crfcap.org/">https://www.crfcap.org/</a> State of Florida Laws from The Florida Senate: <a href="https://www.flsenate.gov/laws">https://www.flsenate.gov/laws</a>