

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

SS.912.CG.2.7 Analyze the impact of civic engagement as a means of preserving or reforming institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Essential Teacher Content Background Information | 2 |
| Lesson Summary | 5 |
| Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace | 7 |
| Government Content Vocabulary | 10 |
| Additional Resources, Answer Keys, and Sources | 11 |

2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.912.C.2.8
 - Changed from “Analyze the impact of citizen participation as a means of achieving political and social change.” to “Analyze the impact of civic engagement as a means of preserving or reforming institutions.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - No changes
- Addition of Benchmark Clarifications
 - Benchmark clarifications are an addition to the 2023-2024 high school civics and government benchmarks. Benchmark clarifications are listed in the lesson summary below.

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Methods For Promoting Social and Political Change
2. Political and Civic Participation: An Example From History

1. Methods For Promoting Social and Political Change

Remaining engaged politically and civically is a central responsibility of citizenship. While citizenship carries with it certain obligations, such as obeying laws, paying taxes, and defending the nation if called upon, no less important are the actions a citizen takes to participate in shaping our constitutional republic. The survival of a constitutional republic relies on “we the people” to engage.

Civic engagement is a key component to preserving or reforming institutions within our constitutional republic. Civic engagement is when a group or individuals address a public concern to benefit the community as a whole. Through civic engagement, citizens may advocate for change or advocate to prevent a change from occurring. Within the structures of our governmental system and the rights afforded to citizens in the U.S. Constitution, there are numerous legal methods that can be used to promote social and political change. They are outlined in the table below.

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| Voting | Citizens have a responsibility for selecting public officials who will represent their interests in government. Through voting, elected officials may get a sense for what issues/causes have support to initiate change and what institutions the population want to preserve. |
| Peaceful protests | Peaceful protests are carried out to raise awareness and advocate for change within the community or society. Addressing public issues by marching, attending rallies, participating in sit-ins, writing letters, or other forms of peaceful protest can bring the need for change to light and encourage more people to support the cause. There have been many protests throughout American history that have led to reform such as: the 1913 Women’s Suffrage Parade, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the Delano Grape Boycott. |
| Petitioning | A petition is an official request to the government or political official to institute change. A petition must then be signed by people that are in support of the cause and are agreeing to what has been proposed. Petitioning was a cherished right in eighteenth century America and while not as popular today, still an important method to impact change. Petitions may be political in nature, legal, or public. Since the rise of the Internet, many citizens start online petitions to raise awareness for a variety of causes. |
| Demonstrations | The right of individuals to come together with others and collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend common interests. This includes the right to assemble in public places and the right to join an association. Peaceable assembly is also understood as freedom of association. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld laws requiring general permits, as well as prosecutions for illegal demonstrations under certain circumstances. The right of individuals to express themselves must be balanced against the need to maintain public order. |

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| | 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. |
| Communicating with public officials | The power to preserve or reform institutions typically lies with the elected officials in government. By engaging in legal and appropriate methods of communicating with elected officials such as written correspondence or attending public meetings, citizens can more directly let their views be heard. As our constitutional republic rests on the principle of "consent of the governed", it is essential that elected officials hear from their constituents. |

2. Political and Civic Participation: An Example From History

The Civil Rights Movement is one of the most well known examples of political and civic participation in U.S. history. Taking place primarily in the 1960s, this movement sought to ensure social and legal equality for African-Americans. Despite the promises of the Reconstruction Era, American society had operated under the premise of "separate but equal" for a majority of the 1900s. Individuals and groups were divided in their stances towards racial equality. Some, like Governor George Wallace, the White Citizens Council, and members of the Ku Klux Klan worked to stop the expansion of rights and desegregation efforts. Others, like Martin Luther King Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee pushed for true equality. While both sides engaged in methods of civic and political participation in attempts to have their viewpoints prevail, it would ultimately be those advocating to abolish segregation, discrimination, and disenfranchisement that would be victorious. The individuals and groups fighting for justice and equality used three main methods:

- A. One effective method used during the Civil Rights Movement was to petition the courts. Most famously, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) brought the *Brown v. Board of Education* case to the Supreme Court in 1954. This victory by the NAACP helped achieve the end of racial segregation in public schools nationwide.
- B. One of the most popular methods of participation was engaging in boycotts, demonstrations, and acts of civil disobedience. In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks was arrested after refusing to give up her seat on the bus and move from the "whites-only" section. For 381 days after, African Americans did not ride the bus in Montgomery. During this boycott, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to prominence. In 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama, Fred Shuttlesworth and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. boycotted stores in downtown Birmingham that would not hire African Americans. Dr. King was arrested during this time and wrote his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." Children participated in the famous "Children's March" in Birmingham, Alabama and student groups across the country held countless protests. And after four black students staged a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina in 1960 that demonstration tactic also gained steam.
- C. A final area where individuals and groups knew that their civic and political participation could make a difference towards achieving their goals was through the use of the ballot box. Massive voter registration drives began around the nation. A large voter registration march took place in 1965. Participants from numerous civil rights organizations gathered to walk from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama to register to vote. After crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met with violence. The event today is known as Bloody Sunday.

Eventually, due to the political and civic participation of many, the Civil Rights Movement achieved great success. Two of the greatest achievements, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, allowed the promises of the Reconstruction Era to finally be fulfilled.

Other notable examples of social and political movements in American history have centered around topics such as: civil rights for various groups, women's suffrage, temperance, decisions to go to war, labor and industrialization, reproductive rights, environmental concerns, and the 2nd Amendment. Throughout all of these historic examples, citizens will use legal methods to promote change (ex. peaceful protest encouraging the U.S. to withdraw from the Vietnam War) but also use the same methods to advocate for preserving institutions (ex. petitions against the Equal Rights Amendment). Ultimately in history, there are always "winners and losers".

Lesson Summary

| BENCHMARK | | |
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| SS.912.CG.2.7 Analyze the impact of civic engagement as a means of preserving or reforming institutions. | | |
| BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will identify legal methods that citizens can use to promote social and political change (e.g., voting, peaceful protests, petitioning, demonstrations, contacting government offices). Students will identify historical examples of citizens achieving or preventing political and social change through civic engagement (e.g., the Abolitionist Movement). | | |
| FLORIDA CIVIC LITERACY EXAM COMPETENCY CONNECTION | | |
| <p>Competency 1: Understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government</p> <p>Competency 3: Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-government</p> <p>Competency 4: Understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society</p> | | |
| OVERVIEW | | |
| In this lesson, students will learn about legal methods of civic engagement that may be used to promote or prevent social and political change. | | |
| ESSENTIAL QUESTION | | |
| How can civic engagement impact social and political change? | | |
| GOVERNMENT CONTENT VOCABULARY | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Amendment, Abolitionist Movement, change (political/social), civic engagement, constituents, demonstration, elected official, peaceful protest, petition, slavery, voting | | |
| INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES | | |
| Gallery walk | Close reading of text | Varying viewpoints |
| MATERIALS | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civic and Political Engagement Placards Kids Civic Engagement slides Civic and Political Engagement Notes Sheet What is the importance of the abolition movement? video (external link) Documents Organizer Document 1: Dis-United States Cartoon slide Document 2: The Liberator Newspaper Document 3: The Corner Stone Speech | | |

- Document 4: The Fugitive Slave Act
- Social and Political Movements Research Activity (optional)
- Social and Political Movements Research Activity Instructions slides (optional)

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

The grade in which this lesson is taught will determine the specific B.E.S.T. standards correlation.

Thematically, this lesson aligns to:

- ELA.11.R.2.1 Evaluate the structure(s) and features in texts
- ELA.11.R.3.2 Paraphrase content from grade-level texts

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

| DAY | ACTIVITY SEQUENCE |
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| DAY 1 | <p>Planning Note: Prior to this lesson, hang the “Civic and Political Engagement Placards” in 5 locations around the room.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin the lesson by asking students to brainstorm various ways in which U.S. citizens can exercise political and civic participation. 2. Instruct students to write their responses in their notebooks or on separate paper. 3. Give students a few moments to write their responses. 4. Once students are done writing, take a small number of responses. Responses will vary, but ensure students list methods such as voting, contacting elected officials, peaceful protests, demonstrations, and petitions. 5. Ask students: Why is it important to engage in this civic responsibility? When citizens engage, what are they usually hoping to achieve? 6. Lead students to an understanding that our constitutional republic relies on civic participation. Civic engagement is an important means to both preserving or reforming institutions. 7. Ask students: At what age can citizens engage civically and potentially have an impact? (Any age!) 8. Display for students the “Kids Civic Engagement” slides. 9. Work through the examples on the slides from the National Archives of students who are using a legal method of engagement (petition/contacting elected officials) in order to promote a message of change. 10. Split students into 5 numbered groups. 11. Distribute the “Civic and Political Engagement Notes Sheet” to every student. 12. Review the handout with the class, explaining to students that they will complete a gallery walk to learn about methods that citizens can use to achieve or prevent social and political change. 13. Explain that while they are at each placard, they will fill in the information in the boxes on their notes sheet. 14. Direct groups to find the placard corresponding with their group number (e.g. group 1 will begin at the ‘voting’ placard). 15. Have groups at each placard assign someone to read the placard to the rest of the group. 16. After they read, students will fill out the information in their own words in the corresponding box on their handout. 17. While groups work, circulate the room to monitor for engagement and understanding. <p>Teacher Note: It is recommended that you set a timer for each rotation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 18. When students are done at the first placard, rotate each group (e.g. group 1 moves to placard 2, with group 5 rotating to placard 1). 19. Continue the above sequence until students complete all 5 placards, having a different student read the placard to their group at each one. 20. Have groups return to their seats. 21. Lead a brief review of each method studied, having each group share out a response briefly explaining one. <p>Teacher Note: Ensure when discussing each method, you address the legality of the method as well as how it can be used to both preserve or reform institutions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22. Once the review is complete, have groups discuss and answer the short answer question at the |

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| | end of the notes sheet. |
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DAY 2

1. Have students watch the “[What is the importance of the abolition movement?](#)” video from Brown University. Instruct them to make a list of legal methods for impacting change they hear the professor mention the abolitionists used in their efforts.
2. Discuss the methods students identified and make connections to the methods discussed yesterday.
3. Remind students that when engaging in legal methods to achieve or prevent political/social change, the impact may be immediate (ex. citizens speak about an upcoming vote at a city council meeting, and their words change the mind of a councilperson), it may garner attention but change takes time (ex. abolitionist movement), or it may fail to have the desired impact.
4. Pass out the “Documents Organizer” to each student. Explain to students that today they are going to analyze a historical example of citizens attempting to achieve political and social change through civic engagement with the Abolitionist Movement.
5. Project the “Document 1: Dis-United States Cartoon” slide and direct students to visually scan the primary source. Instruct them to identify three things that stand out to them in the document.
6. Have a few students share out.
7. Explain to students that this political cartoon, published in a magazine in 1856, portrayed what many Americans were beginning to realize, that the business of slavery was ripping the nation in half. This growing rift had been worsening with the rise of the abolitionist movement and the growth of the newly formed Republican party.
8. Direct students to finish analyzing the political cartoon independently and complete the ‘Document 1’ space on their organizer.
Teacher Note: If additional scaffolding is needed, you could model how to complete the organizer with the students instead.
9. Have students compare responses with a shoulder partner to check for understanding.
10. Divide the class into six groups.
11. Assign two of the groups “Document 2: The Liberator Newspaper”, two different groups “Document 3: The Corner Stone Speech” and the other two groups “Document 4: The Fugitive Slave Act”.
Teacher Note: Clarify with students that the term ‘Negro’ reflected common language of the era.
12. Instruct students to work with their group members to read the document they have been assigned and complete the corresponding document bubble on the organizer.
13. Rotate through groups as they work to monitor for engagement and understanding.
14. When all groups have completed their task, bring the class back together.
15. Direct each group to select a representative to share their portion of the organizer with the whole class.
16. As students share, have the other students complete the remaining bubbles on their organizer for any documents not assigned to their group.
17. Once all groups have shared, direct student attention to the overarching question at the center of their organizer.
18. Have students discuss the question as a whole group and then craft and record a response. Encourage groups to use text evidence in their response.
19. Extend the discussion by having students address the essential question and connect it to this

historical example: How can civic engagement impact social and political change? To what extent did the citizens involved in the abolitionist movement achieve change through civic engagement?

Extension Suggestion: If you want to have students dive deeper into more specific historical instances of citizens achieving or preventing political and social change through civic engagement, this can be done with a small research project. They may use the instructions and topics provided on these “Social and Political Movements Research Activity Instructions” slides and this “Social and Political Movements Research Activity” handout to guide them.

Government Content Vocabulary

| Word/Term | Definition |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1st Amendment | an amendment guaranteeing freedom of religion, press, assembly, speech, and the right to petition the government |
| Abolitionist Movement | movement to end slavery |
| change (political/social) | to make something (specifically a political or social issue) different |
| civic engagement | participation in issues of public concern; also known as civic participation |
| constituents | people public officials are elected to represent |
| demonstration | a mass gathering to raise awareness about an issue of public concern |
| elected official | a person holding public office by virtue of election to that office or through constitutional succession |
| peaceful protest | nonviolent resistance or action for the purpose of achieving social or political change |
| petition | to ask someone in a position of authority to take a specific action in redress of a grievance or problem |
| slavery | the act of owning someone as property |
| voting | the act of casting a ballot in a political election or referendum |

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Florida Department of Education: Florida Civic Literacy Exam Homepage](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau
- *Letter from Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King Jr.

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Civic and Political Engagement Notes Sheet

Sample Answers: Documents Organizer

SOURCES

Records From: First Amendment in Action: Kids Letters from National Archive:

<https://docsteach.org/shared-documents/favorite/Mjk3MTU=>

What is the importance of the abolition movement? video from Brown University:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3Hw1ogXAXM>

William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator Newspaper excerpts from Stanford University:

<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/religion-and-reform/william-lloyd-garrison-introduces-the-liberator-1831/>

The Corner Stone Speech by Alexander Stephens:

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/the-corner-stone-speech/>

The Dis-United States political cartoon from Punch magazine: <http://projects.vassar.edu/punch/hires2.html>

The Fugitive Slave Act: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.33700200/?st=text>

Images on slides sourced within presentation