**Civics Lesson Plan – Competency 1**

**Democracy in Action: Rights, Responsibilities, and Participation**

Defining Democracy

Open Discussion:

What comes to mind when you think of democracy?

Lecture:

Introduce the core principles of democracy. Discuss the different types of democracy. (pp. 3-4)

Activity:

Have students create groups distributing to each group a different democratic principle. Each group will create a skit or presentation that explains the principle and its importance. (p. 5)

Discussion:

Discuss the challenges of balancing rights and responsibilities in a democracy. What are different ways people can participate in a democracy? Discuss the importance of voting in local, state and national elections. (see page 6 for some discussion points)

Rights and Responsibilities YouTube video:  [Rights and Responsibilities](https://safesha.re/4llu)

Homework:

Students will research different forms of civic participation (volunteering, advocacy, protest, etc.) and create a poster to present to the class (p. 7).

End of Year Project:

Students will identify a need in their community and develop a plan to address it (pp. 8-9).

Extra Credit:

Attend a local government meeting

Proof for Credit:

1. Signed verification from a government official stating that the student attended
2. Take meeting notes
3. Photo or video evidence
   1. Photo with official
   2. Short video of student at the meeting
4. Written Reflection with details
5. Meeting agenda or handout

Volunteer for a political campaign or community organization

Proof for Credit:

1. Letter on official letterhead with student’s name, dates and type of work performed
2. Volunteer log sheet
3. Contact person
4. Visual evidence (e.g., video or photo)
5. Written reflection

**Lecture:**

**Core Principles of Democracy:**

Imagine democracy as a building. Its foundation rests on these crucial pillars:

* **Popular Sovereignty:** This is the bedrock. It means the ultimate political power resides in the people. The government's authority comes from the consent of the governed. Think of it as the people holding the keys to the kingdom.
* **Rule of Law:** No one is above the law, not even those in power. Everyone is subject to the same legal rules and procedures. This ensures fairness and prevents arbitrary decisions.
* **Separation of Powers:** Power isn't concentrated in one place. It's divided among different branches of government, like the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. This prevents any one branch from becoming too powerful.
* **Checks and Balances:** This principle takes separation of powers a step further. Each branch has some power to limit or "check" the other branches. This system of checks and balances ensures that no single branch becomes dominant. It's like a system of internal controls.
* **Individual Rights:** Democracies protect fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. These rights are essential for individuals to participate fully in society. These rights are not absolute, however, and often have limitations to protect the rights of others.
* **Free and Fair Elections:** Citizens choose their representatives through regular, free, and fair elections. These elections must be conducted transparently, with all eligible citizens having the opportunity to vote.
* **Equality:** While not always perfectly realized, democracy strives for equality before the law. All citizens should have equal opportunities to participate in the political process, regardless of their background or beliefs.

**Types of Democracy:**

Now, how are these principles put into practice? Democracy takes various forms:

* **Direct Democracy:** This is the purest form, where citizens directly participate in decision-making. Think of ancient Athens, where citizens voted on laws and policies in assemblies. While challenging to implement in large, modern societies, direct democracy elements exist in some forms, like ballot initiatives and referendums.
* **Representative Democracy:** This is the most common form today. Citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. These representatives form legislatures and are accountable to the people. Think of the United States, where we elect members of Congress and a President.
* **Constitutional Democracy:** This is a representative democracy governed by a constitution. The constitution sets limits on the power of the government and protects individual rights. It provides a framework for how the government operates.

It's important to remember that democracy is not a static system. It's constantly evolving and facing challenges. Understanding its core principles and different forms is crucial for being an informed and engaged citizen.

**Group Activity Rules:**

1. The group will be divided into equal groups (self-assign or teacher assign)
2. Each group will be assigned a different democratic principle.
   1. Popular Sovereignty
   2. Rule of Law
   3. Separation of Power
   4. Free and Fair Elections
   5. Freedom of Speech
   6. Freedom of Press
3. Each group will create a short skit or presentation that explains the principle assigned in simple terms. Demonstrate real-world context though a hypothetical scenario or historical example. Explain the importance of the principle in democracy. Explain what would happen if the principle were ignored or violated.
4. Format Options (5 mins):
   1. Short Skit
   2. PowerPoint
   3. Poster presentation
   4. Song/Rap
   5. Other approved format
5. Be creative. Make the presentation creative, humorous and memorable. Presentation will be assessed on:
   1. Clarity of explanation
   2. Illustration of the principle
   3. Explanation of importance
   4. Creativity and engagement
   5. Group collaboration
   6. Staying within time limit
6. After each presentation, allow time for questions and discussion

**Discussion Points:**

**Examples of Conflicts:**

* **Freedom of Speech vs. Public Safety:** Hate speech, incitement to violence, libel, and slander – where do we draw the line? How do we protect free expression while preventing harm?
  + [What does Freedom of Speech mean in the United States?](https://safesha.re/4llv)
* **Individual Property Rights vs. Environmental Protection:** Can a property owner do whatever they want with their land, even if it harms the environment or their neighbors? How do we balance individual rights with the collective good?
* **Right to Privacy vs. National Security:** How do we balance the need for government surveillance to prevent terrorism with the individual's right to privacy?
* **Freedom of Religion vs. Equality:** Can a business owner refuse service to someone based on their religious beliefs? How do we balance religious freedom with the right to equal treatment?

**Homework Instructions:**

1. Topic Selection: Students will choose *one* form of civic participation to research and focus on for their poster. Examples include (but are not limited to): volunteering, advocacy, protest, petitioning, running for office, contacting elected officials, community organizing, boycotts/ethical consumption, digital activism, etc. The chosen topic should be approved by the teacher to avoid duplication.
2. Research: Students are expected to conduct thorough research on their chosen form of civic participation. This should include:
   1. Definition: A clear and concise definition of the chosen form of participation.
   2. Examples: Real-world examples of this form of participation in action (historical or contemporary).
   3. Benefits: The positive impacts this type of participation can have on individuals, communities, or society.
   4. Challenges/Limitations: Any potential challenges, drawbacks, or limitations associated with this form of participation.
   5. How to Get Involved: Practical advice on how students (or other citizens) can get involved in this type of participation.
3. **Poster Creation:** The poster should be visually appealing and informative. It should include:
   1. **Title:** A clear and engaging title related to the chosen form of participation.
   2. **Text:** Concise and informative text summarizing the research findings. Avoid large blocks of text; use bullet points, short paragraphs, and clear headings.
   3. **Visuals:** Relevant images, illustrations, charts, or graphs to enhance the poster and make it visually appealing. Visuals should be high-quality and appropriate for the topic.
   4. **Layout:** A clear and organized layout that is easy to read and follow. Use headings, subheadings, and white space effectively.
   5. **Citations (if applicable):** If using direct quotes or specific data from sources, proper citations should be included (can be small font on the back of the poster if space is limited on the front).
4. Use a standard poster size or trifold
5. Presentations should be 5 mins and will be presented on this date:
6. Presentations will be assessed on:
   1. **Content:** Accuracy and completeness of the research.
   2. **Clarity:** How well the information is presented.
   3. **Visual Appeal:** The overall design and effectiveness of the poster.
   4. **Presentation:** Clarity and engagement of the presentation.
   5. **Adherence to Guidelines:** Following all the rules outlined in this assignment.
7. Allow time for questions and discussion

**End of Year Project:**

1. The project must address a genuine need within the student's local community. This could be their school, neighborhood, town, or city.
2. Students must clearly identify and define the community need they will address. This should involve some initial research or observation to understand the scope and impact of the need. The need should be specific and manageable within the project timeframe. "World hunger" is too broad; "food insecurity at my local elementary school" is more focused.
3. Before starting the project, students must submit a project proposal for teacher approval. The proposal should include:
   1. **Description of the Need:** A detailed explanation of the community need being addressed, including why it is important and who it affects.
   2. **Proposed Solution:** A clear outline of the student's proposed plan to address the need. This should include specific actions, strategies, and resources required.
   3. **Timeline:** A realistic timeline for completing the project, including key milestones and deadlines.
   4. **Resources:** A list of any resources needed (materials, equipment, contacts, etc.).
   5. **Expected Outcomes:** A description of the anticipated impact of the project.
4. After the proposal is approved, students will implement their plan. This may involve:
   1. **Research:** Further research to refine the plan and gather information.
   2. **Action:** Taking concrete steps to address the need (e.g., organizing an event, raising funds, volunteering time, creating educational materials).
   3. **Collaboration:** Working with community partners, organizations, or individuals.
5. Students must document their project progress. This could include:
   1. **Project Journal/Log:** A record of activities, challenges, and reflections.
   2. **Photos/Videos:** Visual documentation of the project in action.
   3. **Data/Metrics:** If applicable, collecting data to measure the impact of the project.
6. **Final Report/Presentation:** Students will create a final report or presentation to share their project with the class. This should include:
   1. **Summary of the Need:** A brief overview of the community need addressed.
   2. **Project Description:** A detailed account of the project activities and implementation.
   3. **Results/Outcomes:** A description of the project's impact and any challenges encountered.
   4. **Reflection:** A personal reflection on the project experience, including what was learned and how it impacted the student's understanding of community engagement.
7. **Presentation Format:** The final presentation can take various forms, such as:
   1. **Oral Presentation:** A presentation to the class using visual aids.
   2. **Poster Presentation:** A display showcasing the project.
   3. **Multimedia Presentation:** A presentation using slides, videos, or other media.
8. Set due dates: The project proposal, progress updates (if required), and final report/presentation are due on the specified dates. Late submissions will be penalized.
9. Student safety is paramount. Any project activities that involve potential risks must be reviewed and approved by the teacher and parents/guardians.
10. **Project Assessment:** The project will be assessed based on:
    1. **Identification of Need:** Clarity and relevance of the identified community need.
    2. **Project Plan:** Feasibility and effectiveness of the proposed solution.
    3. **Implementation:** Quality of the project implementation and effort demonstrated.
    4. **Documentation:** Thoroughness and accuracy of the project documentation.
    5. **Final Report/Presentation:** Clarity, organization, and content of the report/presentation.
    6. **Reflection:** Depth and insight of the student's reflection on the project experience.