

Lessons, activities and resources for grades 6 – 8

The New Hampshire public schools that serve grades 6-8 are most commonly organized according to the middle school model, a natural partner with the goals and practices of good civic education. Teams of students and teachers frequently work together for the majority of the school day and seek to develop the values of shared responsibility, cooperation and productivity that are central to civic education. Appropriate middle school level civic curriculum can support the core competencies of both Social Studies and Language Arts as students complete research and explore issues related to the wider community, whether it is local, state, national, or even international. The skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are central to successful civic education, just as they are essential to the middle school Language Arts competencies. The middle school model encourages across-the-curriculum projects, which can easily be tied together through civic education themes.

Bill of Rights Institute

<http://billofrightsinstitute.org> Educator and student resources at this site consist of a multitude of primary source documents, an "Americapedia" which includes a list of civic values with concise definitions and connections to related topics, interactive games, short explanatory videos, and Smartboard lessons. The Bill of Rights Institute sponsors a "We the Students" Scholarship Contest in the Fall and offers support for interested teachers and students as well as ongoing professional development workshops throughout the year in several cities, including Boston.

Center for Civic Education

<http://new.civiced.org> For a perfect example of a middle school level integrated curriculum project, check out the Project Citizen section under Programs on this site.

C-SPAN Classroom

<http://www.c-spanclassroom.org> This website provides lesson plans as well as audio and video clips on topics related to the United States government, its structure, and its history. Teachers must register to access the resources and links to oral history interviews with past presidents, Supreme Court oral arguments, and an interactive Supreme Court timeline.

icivics:Teacher this way!

<http://www.icivics.org/teachers> Enter through the "Teacher this Way!" portal to make the best use of the site. Grade 5-12 teachers can choose their state, course or topic, and grade to narrow down the extensive lesson plans available. Interactive games and well designed Web Quests will engage middle school students in some compelling learning modules. Go back to the home page to access "Drafting Board," a powerful interactive tool that leads students through the process of developing a clearly argued persuasive essay on a variety of

Social Studies topics. Get the most out of this site by creating a log in for your class.

National Archives

<http://www.archives.gov> Docs Teach: a series of lesson plans that use primary sources to teach about different periods of U.S. history and the Constitution. This site also provides links to state and regional primary sources and presidential libraries, as well as professional development opportunities for teachers.

National Center for State Courts

<http://www.ncsc.org/services-and-experts/public-outreach-tools.aspx> A series of three graphic novels to educate the public and students about how the courts work and their role in a democratic society. The novels address internet piracy, stolen identity, and jury duty. They may be downloaded online, or are available for purchase with accompanying lesson plans.

Rock the Vote: Democracy Day

<http://democracyday.com> A short and simple video about the history of voting rights in the US would be appropriate for grades 5 - 9. Teachers should preview other videos for content and language.

Sunnylands Classroom

<http://www.sunnylandsclassroom.org> This site hosts a multimedia curriculum on the Constitution that includes award-winning documentaries, videos featuring Supreme Court justices, interactive games, and downloadable books. Many of the materials have been close-captioned in 14 languages.

US Courts

<http://www.uscourts.gov/EducationalResources.aspx> Court literacy is the focus of this website, which features free, downloadable, in-depth resources to help students understand how the courts work, key constitutional amendments, legal concepts, and more. Classrooms to Courtrooms provides teen-relevant scenarios to stage in class, as well as in-court simulations of trials with accompanying scripts. You Be the Supreme Court features materials for simulating Supreme Court deliberations.