

Lessons, activities and resources for grades K - 5

Many elementary schools adopt social or character education programs to teach skills that promote positive classroom climate and encourage behavior conducive to learning. The skills and dispositions emphasized in these programs correlate with exemplary Civics Education goals and can serve as the foundation for citizenship and civic engagement. Another avenue for connecting Civics Education to current content is in the celebration of national holidays. Many elementary school teachers offer instruction and activities for Labor Day, Constitution Day, Election Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Earth Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, and Independence Day. Opportunities to link to civics concepts are clear.

Character Counts! Lesson Plans

<http://charactercounts.org/lesson-plans/index.html> Lesson plans related to this organization's "Six Pillars of Character," one of which is Citizenship, can be used to reinforce skills learned in other character education programs, including:

Responsive Classroom <http://www.responsiveclassroom.org>

or

Habits of Mind <http://www.habitsofmind.org>

K - Grade 2

Education in the primary grades focuses on Language Arts and Mathematics. Adding Civics Education to an already long list of requirements might seem impossible. Integrating Civics Education with Language Arts (**Civics Bookshelf** <http://www.lawanddemocracy.org/bookshelf.html>) and Social Skills programs that are already in place offers the best possibility for implementation. Consider the following examples from the **North Carolina Civic Education Consortium** <http://database.civics.unc.edu> as lessons that can be accomplished in any classroom.

Star Light Star Bright: Considering Positive Possibilities

<http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/starlightstarbright.pdf> A simple lesson in which students discuss their group goals and then design a star to illustrate their goals for their classroom community. Focusing on the group encourages civility and respect.

What To Do When You Have a Bad Day

<http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/BadDay.pdf> A concrete lesson in Civics and Language Arts uses the book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst and travel brochures from around the world in order to learn how to cope with feelings of discouragement and frustration in a positive and respectful manner.

Grade 3

Third grade Social Studies often focuses on local history and government, topics that provide perfect opportunities to integrate Civics Education into current practices. The North Carolina Civic Education Consortium <http://database.civics.unc.edu> presents lessons connected to the study of local communities. Below are two examples of civics resources that can be connected to existing content.

Exploring Community Responsibility: The Web of My Community

<http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2012/05/Web-of-Communityactivity.pdf> In an interactive exercise students create an actual web of community resources that introduces concepts of citizenship and responsibilities of local government.

Windows to Our Community

<https://database.civics.unc.edu/files/2012/05/windowstoourcommunity1.pdf> A conclusion to lessons on local government in which students illustrate and label the positive traits of their communities and also show areas where their communities can be improved.

Grade 4

New Hampshire history and government are part of most fourth grade Social Studies Curriculum. As in grade 3, Civics Education can be integrated into current practices and existing content. One example from PBS Teachers is shown below.

PBS Teachers Democracy Project

<http://pbskids.org/democracy/parents-and-teachers> was developed to help teachers in Grades 3-6 engage their students in understanding the structure of local, state and federal governments and how the function of government affects our everyday lives. The site includes online activities and lesson plans. [Honk if you Agree: Part 1](#) is a detailed but simple lesson plan well suited to the 4th grade curriculum. Students design cardboard cars with bumper stickers based on a state issue. Discussions require students to base their opinions about political issues on evidence and reason.

Grade 5

An introduction to the origins and structure of the United States Government, an awareness of the Founding Documents, and a focus on the roles of citizens in a democracy are all part of most fifth grade Social Studies. The obvious and frequent connections to Civics Education are shown in the lessons on the following web sites:

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 5th grade 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.

PBS Teachers Democracy Project

<http://pbskids.org/democracy/parents-and-teachers> Although somewhat focused on the 2012 Presidential election, the site also contains three very clear, kid friendly slide shows: How Government Affects Me, a look at how federal, state and local decisions affects communities; President for a Day, an introduction to the presidency; and Inside the Voting Booth, which introduces students to the history of suffrage. Lesson plans are available for these topics.