

Unit 5, Citizenship in Action

Meeting 1, Get the Principle

Meeting Summary

This unit is comprised of two meetings.

In this first meeting, students discuss whether or not one person has the power to make a difference in the world. Then they fill out a handout to identify the various communities they belong to and then consider to what extent they are active citizens in each. They conclude by deciding how to celebrate the end of the group in the next session.

Key Points

- ★ It's easy to feel small and ineffective sometimes in the world. Yet there are many individuals who are making a difference.
- ★ To be an active citizen, you can start small and close to home - in your own family, school, neighborhood - and make a big, positive impact on that community.
- ★ "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."
- ★ A small action step can start the ball of positive change rolling.

Preparation and Materials

- ★ Photocopy one **I Am a Citizen** handout for each student.

Vocabulary

Community

Active / Passive citizen

Activities

Making a Difference: Short Discussion

- ★ Pose the following questions to kick off the group:

- 1) I'd like to know your opinion. Do you think that a kid or a teenager can make a positive difference in the world? Why or why not?
- 2) Do any of you know someone your age who has made a positive difference in the world - even in a little way?
- 3) Everyone think of a way you might make a positive difference in your world this week. This could be something small. When was the last time you spoke to a grandparent? Would they appreciate a call from you? Would it make your little sister's day if you played a game with her? Does a friend need a listening ear? What about calling your parents to see if they need you to pick something up on the way home.

- ★ Summary Point:

You don't have to be a national hero to make a difference in the world. You may not realize the positive example you set for a younger sibling or cousin or neighbor. You may not realize what a difference it makes when you simply speak up in this group and say what's on your mind.

I Am a Citizen

- ★ Hand out one **I Am a Citizen** handout to each student and walk students through the first three steps of this five-step activity. Allow time for students to complete one step at a time:

- 1) **Step 1.** Read down the left-hand column and check (✓) communities to which you belong.
- 2) **Step 2.** Write the name of each community on the space provided. If you belong to any other communities, write these down under "Others."
- 3) **Step 3.** Star (★) communities where you play an active role: you help out, you speak up when something's bothering you or something seems unfair, you care about others in the community (not just yourself), etc.

- ★ Discussion questions:

- 1) What are some of the communities you belong to? Where do you play an active role?
- 2) Agree or disagree: Most communities succeed with or without community participation.

★ Important discussion point:

Problems are bound to arise in every community, whenever people get together with their different personalities, opinions and needs. The key question is this: How do people in the community respond to problems? Are they active or passive citizens?

★ Conclude with two final steps:

- 1) **Step 4.** Read down the left-hand column and apply this question to every community: “In my opinion, is there anything that needs changing for the better in this community?” (*Write this question on the board.*) If “yes,” circle the name of the community.
- 2) **Step 5.** Write in the right-hand column the name of one of the “circled” communities and describe what needs changing for the better.

★ Prompts, if needed:

- 1) What is a problem in one of these communities that needs to be solved?
- 2) If you could change anything in your neighborhood, or at school, or on the hockey team, what would that be?

★ Ask students to fill in the two remaining boxes in the right-hand column.

★ Do a quick go-round, asking each student to report one thing they think needs changing for the better in one chosen community.

★ Don’t spend time debriefing. Move directly to the three final questions, taking time as needed to explore student answers. Compile a list of answers to questions (3) and (4) on the board or newsprint.

- 1) Is this group a community?
- 2) How many people does it take to form a community anyway?
- 3) If you could change anything for the better in this community, in our group, what would that be? Why?
- 4) Other young people are going to participate in this program in the future. You are all experts who’ve been through the program. What would make this a better experience for future participants? *Prompts, if needed:* What worked for you and what didn’t? What changes would you make in the content, the things we talked about? Would you change any of the activities?

Group Celebration

★ Remind students that the next session will be their last.

I want to applaud you for the wonderful work you’ve done over the past 9 weeks. [*Cite a few specifics.*] This work is worth celebrating. In our final session, let’s have a community celebration designed by

the community – that's you! How would you like to celebrate the finale of this group, and your good work, next week?

- ★ Provide parameters (budget, time) and facility ground rules (no alcohol).
- ★ Invite students to brainstorm answers to the following questions. Compile a list of ideas on newsprint.
 - 1) Let's talk food. Do you want to have cake? Ice cream? Pizza?
 - 2) Are there one or two family members you'd like to invite?
 - 3) Would you like to invite a speaker? Is there anyone in particular you'd like to hear from? How about a judge?
 - 4) Would each of you like the chance to speak? What kinds of things might you say? Let's practice.
 - 5) Would you like to include poetry or artwork or decorations?

Unit 5, Meeting 1 – Student Handout

I Am a Citizen

I am a citizen of many communities.

A planet: _____

A country: _____

A state: _____

A town: _____

A neighborhood: _____

A street: _____

A family/families: _____

A school: _____

Sports team(s): _____

Music group(s): _____

Clubs/activities: _____

Place of worship: _____

Others: _____

If I could change things for the better in 3 communities, this is what I'd change...

Community 1: _____
This needs changing for the better:

Community 2: _____
This needs changing for the better:

Community 3: _____
This needs changing for the better:

Unit 5, Citizenship in Action

Meeting 2, Live the Principle

Meeting Summary

Students celebrate their participation in the group. After concluding the **Circle of Appreciation** activity, in which they applaud each other's positive traits and contributions, students receive **Certificates of Completion**.

Key Points

- ★ It's important and laudable to see something through from start to finish.
- ★ Everyone can bring something positive to a community.
- ★ Take the positive things we've done and learned here into other communities.

Preparation and Materials

- ★ Help students procure refreshments, decorations, and other supplies as needed.
- ★ Invite guests/speakers to attend.
- ★ Supply multi-colored markers.
- ★ For the **Circle of Appreciation** activity, print students' names on separate sheets of cardstock. Design each name in a different font to help students feel distinguished.
- ★ Have on hand **Certificates of Completion**.

Activities

Closing Celebration

- ★ Stage the celebration as you and students have designed.

Circle of Appreciation

- ★ Students and facilitator gather in a circle. Guests may observe, or talk quietly among themselves, but do not participate directly.
- ★ Hand each student a sheet of cardstock printed with someone's name (other than his or her own), along with a colored marker.
- ★ Explain the directions:

In a moment, we're going to hand our names from person to person around the circle. When you get a name, write down one word or a short phrase that captures something positive about the person: something that's impressed you or that you admire. Keep this short; we're not signing yearbooks!
- ★ Students have one minute to write on each piece of cardstock. At one-minute points, direct students to "switch." (When students receive their own name, they should pass this on to the next person in the circle.)
- ★ Once names have come full circle, distribute the cards to each student to read quietly to him or herself, and to take home as a keepsake.

Certificates of Completion

- ★ Congratulate students on their participation, and talk about the many things that you have learned from students over the course of the program. Mention specifics.
- ★ Hand out the **Certificates of Completion**.