

LET'S TALK CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In this lesson, students learn the importance of advocacy as a form of civic engagement.

Grade Levels 3–6

Note: Lessons are designed to support multiple grade levels. Modification suggestions and extensions are for alternative pacing and to engage students at various levels.

Standards

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

SOCIAL AWARENESS
RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

Social Studies Standards (NCSS)

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
Power, Authority, and Governance
Civic Ideals and Practices

Essential Question(s)

- What does it mean to be an advocate?
- Why is it important to speak up for the things you believe in?

Learning Objectives

- I can define *advocacy*.
- I can identify ways in which people can advocate for a cause.
- I can explain why it's important to advocate for an issue, even if it's difficult to do so.

What You'll Need

"Eight Questions for Autumn Peltier," "Their Day in Court," and "KOTY Nominee: Meet Mina" articles from TIME for Kids

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Introduce It

Ask students to think of ways people support their communities (such as donating, fundraising, protesting, and educating others). They can look through Service Stars articles for some ideas. Make a list on the board. Add the word *advocacy*. See if anyone can explain what it means to advocate for something. Provide a simple definition of *advocacy*: “the act of supporting or arguing for a cause.” Have students turn and talk about the following:

- Have you ever advocated for a cause?
- Why is it important to speak up for causes you believe in?

Read About It

Assign each student one of the following articles:

- “Eight Questions for Autumn Peltier”
- “Their Day in Court”
- “KOTY Nominee: Meet Mina”

While reading, have students take note of what issue is being publicly advocated for and how.

Discuss It

Group students based on the article they chose. Ask them to discuss their notes and to write a couple of sentences to share with the class, summarizing the article. The following questions can be used to guide students’ small group discussions:

- What cause or issue was being advocated for in the article you read? What prompted each person’s advocacy journey?
- In what ways did each person or group of people show support for a cause?
- Do you think it’s easy for people to speak up for a cause? Explain.

Have groups share their summary and their takeaways from the articles they read. Have a discussion about whether students think it’s easy to be an advocate for something. Have volunteers share why it’s important to be an advocate for an issue, even if it’s difficult.

Act on It

How can students get started being advocates for a cause? Start the advocacy journey as a class. Have students talk about some issues facing their school. Maybe surrounding streets or parking lots need to be made safer, or water-filling stations need to be added to reduce single-use bottles. After making a list, have the class vote on the need they feel is the most urgent. Work together as a class to write a letter to the appropriate faculty member (administrator, custodian, superintendent, etc.) explaining the issue they’ve identified and their ideas about addressing the problem. Remind students to highlight what help or support is needed from the adult they’re writing to. They can also come up with ways to spread the word to the school community to garner more support for the cause.