

MIDDLE SCHOOL CIVICS: TWO QUARTERS

Scope and sequence if taught in the spring semester

FIRST QUARTER (9 weeks)

UNIT ONE: CIVIC CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES (4 weeks—Jan.-Feb)

The United States of America is unique among nations in that it was founded upon an idea. What unites us as Americans is our shared commitment to those ideas and ideals. Any analysis of the structure of American government requires that students first understand the foundational concepts that are the rationale for a constitutional democracy. This unit will ask students to explore the key concepts and principles upon which the government of the United States was established.

I. How can natural/human rights be protected? How does the idea of the “common good” give rise to a social contract? What is the proper balance between individual freedom and the common good? Why is “civic virtue” necessary for a democracy to survive? (7 days)

6.3.8.CivicsHR.1: Construct an argument as to the source of human rights and how they are best protected.

6.3.8.CivicsPR.1: Analyze primary sources to explain how democratic ideas in the United States developed from the historical experiences of ancient societies, England and the North American colonies.

6.1.8HistorySE.3.a: Analyze how the leadership of George Washington during the American Revolution and as president allowed for the establishment of American democracy.

- What are natural/human rights? How do natural rights represent the dignity of each human being? How did the idea of human rights develop?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What are human rights?](#)
- How did the Magna Carta influence the founders and American government? How did Enlightenment ideas influence America’s founding documents?
 - The National Archives: [Magna Carta](#)
 - iCivics: [The Enlightenment mini-lesson](#)
- What is the “common good”? Why is a commitment to the common good important in a democratic society? What ideas from the classical republics about the need for civic virtue did the Founders adopt?
 - Center for Civic Education: [Common Welfare and Civic Virtue](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is the “common good”?](#)
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Why is civic virtue important in a democracy?](#)
- What is the social contract?
 - iCivics: [John Locke and the Social Contract Mini-lesson](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Social Contract Theory of Government](#)

II. Why do we need government? What makes government legitimate? (7 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPI.1: Evaluate, take, and defend a position on why government is necessary, and the purposes government should serve.

6.3.8.CivicsPI.2: Evaluate the extent to which different forms of government reflect the history and values of various societies (e.g., monarchy, democracy, republic, dictatorship.)

- What would life be like in a state of nature? Why do we need government?
 - Center for Civic Education: [Why do we need a government](#)
 - iCivics: Why Government? Contrast Hobbes and Locke
- What is the difference between power and authority?
 - NJ Center for Civic Ed: [Power and Authority](#)
- What is the source of authority? What is meant by “consent of the governed”? What is majority rule and why is it important in a democracy?
 - NJ Center for Civic Ed: [What does “consent of the governed” mean?](#)
- What forms can governments take? What are the essential elements of a democracy?
 - NJ Center for Civic Ed: [Comparing Forms of government](#)
 - iCivics: [Who Rules?](#)
- What is the “rule of law” and why is it necessary for authority to be legitimate? How has the rule of law prevented abuse of authority?
 - New Jersey Courts: [What is the Rule of Law?](#) OR
 - Facing History: [The Rule of Law and Why it Matters](#)
 - National Constitution Center: [U.S. v. Nixon](#)

III. How can conflicts be resolved peacefully in a democratic society? Why are active listening and civil discourse about conflicting political ideologies or viewpoints necessary in a democratic society? (2 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.3: Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.

- What are the sources of conflict? How are conflicts resolved? How can conflicts be resolved peacefully?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [How can conflicts be resolved peacefully?](#) Or
 - NPR: [Conflict and its Resolution](#)
- What strategies can help incorporate multiple perspectives into civil discourse?
 - Learning for Justice: [Perspectives For a Diverse America](#) (Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action) OR
 - Facing History: [Fostering Civil Discourse](#) OR
 - Story Corps [Active Listening Activity](#)
- Why is respect for diverse perspectives a crucial component of civil discourse?
 - Choices: [Values and Public Policy](#)

V. Media Literacy Skills (3 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.3: Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.

- How can you determine the accuracy of what you read and view
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Media Literacy](#) OR
 - Learning for Justice: [Digital and Civic Literacy](#) OR
 - Facing History: [Time to Boost Media Literacy](#)
 - [FactCheck.org](#) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit “consumer advocate” for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics by monitoring the factual accuracy of what is being said in TV ads, debates, speeches, interviews, etc.

UNIT TWO: FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS (5 weeks—Feb.-Mar.)

This unit examines how the foundational concepts identified in Unit One are articulated in the nation's founding documents and established in the structure of American government. Students will explore the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, providing the background for the next unit's study of how the Declaration inspired generations of Americans to more fully realize its core concepts of liberty, equality, and justice. The United States Constitution and the state constitutions provide the structural framework for limited government and constitutional democracy, and understanding these documents is a crucial component of active citizenship. The unit concludes with an examination of the Bill of Rights and the amendment process as students come to understand that the Constitution is a living document and American democracy is an ongoing experiment requiring their active participation.

I. The Declaration of Independence (2 days)

6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.a: Use primary sources as evidence to explain why the Declaration of Independence was written and how its key principles evolved to become unifying ideas of American democracy .

- Why was the Declaration of Independence written and what did it say?
 - Edsitement: [The Argument of the Declaration of Independence](#) OR
 - National Archives: [Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence](#) OR
 - National Archives: [To Sign or Not to Sign](#)

II. What was wrong with the Articles of Confederation? (1 day)

6.1.8.HistoryCC.3.d: Compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation and the United States Constitution in terms of the decision-making powers of national government.

- What was wrong with the Articles of Confederation?
 - iCivics Lesson: [Wanted: A Just Right Government](#) OR
 - Edsitement: [The Road to the Constitutional Convention](#)

III. The question of representation at the Federal Convention (2 days)

6.1.8.CivicsPI3.d. Use data and other evidence to determine the extent to which demographics influenced the debate on representation in Congress and federalism by examining the New Jersey and Virginia plans.

6.1.8.Civics.PD.3.a: Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

- How many representatives should each state have?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [New Jersey and the Federal Convention](#)

IV. Three Branches of Government (1 week)

6.1.8.Civics.PD.3.a: Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

- Why did the founders create three branches of government?
 - Civics Webquest: [The Constitution: Rules for Running a Country](#)

- What are the powers, responsibilities, limits and role of the Congress? How do the three branches of government interact? Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances
 - Edsitement: [Balancing the Three Branches](#) OR
 - National Archives: [Checks and Balances in Action](#) and [Separation of Powers or Shared Powers](#)
- How does a bill become a law?
 - iCivics: [Legislative Branch](#) OR
 - National Archives: [Congress in Article I of the Constitution](#) OR [The Legislative Process: Congress at Work](#)
- What are the powers, responsibilities, limits and role of the President?
 - iCivics: [Executive Branch](#) OR [A Very Big Branch](#) OR [Executive Command](#)
- How does Judicial Review function?
 - U.S. Courts: [About the Supreme Court](#)
 - Library of Congress: [Marbury v. Madison](#)
 - iCivics: [Judicial Branch](#) OR
 - Edsitement: [The Judicial Power of the United States](#)

V. Federalism (3 days)

6.1.8.Civics.PD.3.a: Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

- How and why is federalism a key part of the structure of U.S. government?
 - iCivics: [The "Federal" in Federalism](#) OR
 - National Archives: [Understanding Federalism](#)
- How has federalism changed over time?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Federalism: Should Management of Elections be left to the states?](#)

VI. State and Local Government (3 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPR.7: Compare how ideas become laws at the local, state and national level.

- New Jersey State government: [Governor](#), [Legislature](#) and [Judiciary](#)
- [New Jersey municipal government](#)
- [New Jersey school districts](#)
- [New Jersey counties](#)
- [State House Tour](#) has a variety of resources available to teachers, such as how a bill becomes a law in New Jersey) in addition to a one-hour tour of the State House.

VII. The Bill of Rights (1 week)

6.1.8.Civics.PD.3.a: Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

- Did the Constitution need a Bill of Rights?
 - iCivics: [Federalists and Antifederalists views](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Federalists and Anti-Federalists](#)
- Compromise at the Convention: Why did James Madison change his mind?
 - Constituting America: [Why did James Madison change his mind?](#)

- How does the Bill of Rights protect rights?
 - National Constitution Center: [Eight basic facts about the Bill of Rights](#) OR
 - National Archives: [The Bill of Rights: What Does it Say?](#)
- How does the Bill of Rights ensure that fundamental human rights are protected?
 - iCivics Lesson: [You've Got Rights!](#) OR iCivics Game: [Do I Have a Right?](#) OR [Amendment Mini-Lesson](#)
- How is the Constitution Amended? Why did the founders make the amendment process difficult?
 - U.S. Senate: [Amending the Constitution](#) OR
 - National Park Service: [Amending the Constitution](#)

Performance Assessment: E.g., [Simulated Federal Convention](#)

6.3.8.CivicsPR.5: Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.

As a performance assessment, engage your students in a Simulated Federal Convention as participants from the 12 states represented in Philadelphia in 1787 to appreciate the need for compromise and the compromises made. One possibility is to focus on the role of New Jersey's 14 delegates regarding the debate over representation. Another more sophisticated activity focuses on the issue of slavery at the [Federal Convention](#). (3 days)(Can be done after the election)

VIII. American Civic Ideals (2 days)

6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.a: Use primary sources as evidence to explain why the Declaration of Independence was written and how its key principles evolved to become unifying ideas of American democracy.

6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b: Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution (i.e., consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances, and individual rights) in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time.

- What are ideals? What are practices? What are American civic ideals?
 - Choices: [Ideals in U.S. Founding Documents](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What are American Civic Ideals?](#)

SECOND QUARTER (9 weeks)

UNIT THREE: AMERICAN IDEALS AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE (4 weeks-Mar.-May.)

This unit will investigate the challenges and triumphs to fulfilling our American ideals. The unit will begin with an examination of the goals highlighted in the Preamble of the Constitution. By tracing the preamble through American history, students will assess the effectiveness of our early citizens in meeting the goals of the Constitution. Students will evaluate how each American ideal has grown and expanded to be more inclusive. As we continue to struggle in fulfilling the potential of the American ideals, students will be encouraged to identify additional areas of growth toward a “more perfect union.”

How well has the U.S. met the fundamental principles established in the Constitution: “to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty... “?

I. How has extending the right to vote supported the concept of the consent of the governed? (1 week)

6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a: Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans and Native Americans during this time period.

6.1.8.CivicsDP.4.a: Research and prioritize the most significant events that led to the expansion of voting rights during the Jacksonian period.

6.1.8.CivicsHR.4.a: Examine sources from a variety of perspectives to describe efforts to reform education, women’s rights, slavery and other issues during the Antebellum period.

6.1.8.HistoryUP.5.a: Analyze the effectiveness of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the United State Constitution from multiple perspectives.

- Who could vote in the early United States?
 - C-SPAN Classroom: Video Clip: [Who Could Vote in the Early United States?](#) OR [The Expansion of Voting Rights charts and video links](#) OR
 - PBS Learning Media: [History of U.S. Voting Rights](#)
- The Fifteenth Amendment: PBS Learning Media: [The 15th Amendment and the Battle Over Voting Rights](#)
- The struggle for Women’s Right to Vote:
 - PBS Learning Media: [She Resisted: Seneca Falls Convention; Strategies of Suffrage; She Resisted: Strategies of Suffrage](#) OR
 - iCivics: [Women’s Suffrage: A Movement in the Right Direction Infographic](#) OR
 - The New Jersey Center for Civic Education: [Alice Paul and Women’s Suffrage](#) OR
 - League of Women Voters of Southern Monmouth County [“Fight For the Vote”](#)

II. How does the Constitution “establish justice”? How do we ensure that people are treated fairly? Can there be justice without equality? (1 week)

6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a: Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans and Native Americans during this time period.

6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.b: Evaluate the impact of the institution of slavery on the political and economic expansion of the United States.

6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.c: Construct an argument to explain how the expansion of slavery violated human rights and contradicted American ideals.

6.1.8.CivicsHR.4.a: Examine sources from a variety of perspectives to describe efforts to reform education, women’s rights, slavery and other issues during the Antebellum period.

6.3.8.CivicsDP.3: Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.

- What is Justice or Fairness?
 - Background article: [Equality and Justice: History and Ideals — Equal Justice Under Law](#)
 - Culture of Dignity.com activity: [The Difference between Equality and Equity](#)
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is fairness or justice?](#)
- To what extent has the United States established justice for all?

- How fairly has the United States treated Native Americans?
 - C-Span Classroom Lesson Plan: [The Indian Removal Act of 1830](#) OR
 - PBS Learning Media: [Trail of Tears: The Cherokee Fight Against Removal](#) and [Worcester v. Georgia Cherokee Nation](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Cherokee Removal historical roleplaying activity](#) OR
 - Constitutional Rights Foundation: [Choosing a Native American Policy: Simulation Activity](#)
- How fairly has the United States treated African Americans?
 - NEH Edsitement: [Slavery and the American Founding; “The Inconsistency Not to be Excused”](#) OR
 - PBS learning Media: [Teaching Guide: Exploring American Abolitionism](#) OR
 - C-Span Classroom: [Poll Taxes](#); [Literacy Test](#); [Grandfather Clause](#)
- What is “due process” and how does it protect individual rights?
 - Justice In The Classroom: [Due Process and the Constitution](#)
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is due process and why is it important?](#)
- What does the 14th Amendment mean by “equal protection under the law”?
 - PBS Learning Media: [The Reconstruction Amendments](#) OR
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What does “equal protection” mean?](#) (You may want to only teach about procedural due process since substantive due process is a bit more complicated and might be saved for high school).

III. How well has the U.S. balanced the need for order and the protection of rights during times of peace and times of war? (1 week)

6.1.8.EconNE.4.a: Explain how major technological developments revolutionized land and water transportation, as well as the economy, in New Jersey and the nation.

6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.a: Explain how and why constitutional civil liberties were impacted by acts of government during the Early Republic (i.e., Alien and Sedition Acts).

6.3.8.CivicsDP.2: Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and limitations of First Amendment Rights (e.g., Supreme Court decisions).

- What is “domestic tranquility”?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [How do you “ensure domestic tranquility”?](#)
- How does the Fourth Amendment protect privacy rights?
 - New Hampshire Institute for Civics Education: [Privacy and the 4th Amendment](#)
 - Learningforjustice: [What is a Hate Crime?](#)
- Should privacy rights be curtailed during war?
 - C-SPAN: [Schenck v. United States and the Espionage Act](#)
 - Bill or Rights Institute: [Security, Liberty and the Patriot Act](#)
- What is habeas corpus and why is it important?
 - C-SPAN Classroom: [The Meaning and Origins of Habeas Corpus](#) OR [The Writ of Habeas Corpus and the Constitution](#)
- What is the peaceful transfer of power important in a democracy?
 - iCivics: [Peaceful Transfer of Power](#)

IV. To what extent has the American experience succeeded in promoting the general welfare or common good? How can we best balance individual rights and the general welfare when these important concepts are in conflict? (1 week)

6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.a. Cite evidence to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and decisions of early administrations of the national government met the goals established in the Constitution.

6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b and 6.3.8.CivicsPR.2: Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution (i.e., consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, limited government, separation of powers, checks and balances and individual rights) in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time.

6.1.8.HistoryUP.5.a: Analyze the effectiveness of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the United State Constitution from multiple perspectives.

6.3.8.CivicsDP.3: Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.

- How does the government promote the general welfare or common good?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What does “promote the general welfare” mean?](#)
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is “liberty?”](#)
- Why is freedom of expression so important? When should it be limited?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [First Amendment Freedom of Expression](#) OR
 - National Constitution Center [The First Amendment Plan of Study](#) OR
 - TPS: [Sedition Act: Should speech ever be restricted?](#)
 - American Bar Association: [Right to Petition Lesson Plan](#) OR
 - Freedoms Foundation: [Freedom of Petition & Assembly Lesson Plan](#) OR
 - National Constitution Center: [Freedom of Assembly & Petition Lesson Plan](#)
- What is the difference between “the establishment of religion” and the “free exercise of religion”? How do we balance religious beliefs v. the common good?
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [How does the First Amendment protect freedom of religion?](#)
- How do we balance individual rights and the general welfare when these important concepts are in conflict?
 - C-SPAN: [Individual Liberty and the Common Good](#)

Performance Assessment: Mini Moot Court, Mock Trial or Simulated Legislative hearing

6.3.8.CivicsPR.5: Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.

As a performance assessment, engage your student in a Mock Trial, Moot Court, Simulated Congressional Hearing, Simulated State Legislative Hearing or Town Council Hearing. Directions for each are included in [Suggested Practices](#) and many scenarios can be found in online materials by the [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#), [Street Law](#), the [American Bar Association](#), and the [NJ State Bar Foundation](#), including the [NJ State Bar Foundation Law Adventure Competition](#), and [elsewhere](#). (3 days)

UNIT FOUR: THE ROLE OF THE CITIZEN (5 weeks: Apr.-June)

In addition to civic education content, students require opportunities to develop and practice the skills and dispositions to become active and well-informed supporters of their community. Voting is an important responsibility of citizenship, but students must also learn how to interact with the appropriate levels of government to address matters of public policy that affect their lives and occupations. This unit explores the nature of citizenship and offers questions and strategies to help students develop the skills they will need to be active members and supporters of their communities.

I. Public Policy and Civil Society (2 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPI.3: Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue and share this information with a governmental or nongovernmental organization as a way to gain support for addressing the issue.
6.3.8.CivicsPI.4: Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.

- NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is public policy? What is civil society?](#) OR
- Gettingsmart: [Strategies for teaching Public Policy](#)

II. What are issues that are important to be addressed at the local, state, national and/or global level? Which issue is more important and feasible to address? (3 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.2: Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
6.3.8.CivicsDP.1: Identify an issue of inequality, develop multiple solutions and communicate the best one to an appropriate governmental body.
6.3.8.CivicsPR3: Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict (e.g., liberty and equality)
6.3.8.CivicsPR.4: Use evidence and quantitative data to propose or defend a public policy related to climate change.

- A variety of organizations have developed frameworks to help students address public policy issues:
 - NJ Center for Civic Education: [Selecting a Public Policy Issue to Address](#)
 - [Project Citizen](#)
 - [Youth Participatory Action Research](#)
 - [Generation Citizen](#)
 - [Mikva Challenge](#)
 - Human Rights Educators USA: [Service Learning for Human Rights](#)
 - Newseum: [Identifying community issues](#)

Students can work on the issue they have identified one day a week for six weeks, while the remaining four days a week are dedicated to examining how well the United States has met its ideals as set forth in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.

III. How can a class determine the best solution to an important public policy issue? (1 week)

6.3.8.CivicsPI.3: Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue and share this information with a governmental or nongovernmental organization as a way to gain support for addressing the issue.

6.3.8.CivicsPD.1: Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments and develop a reasoned conclusion.

6.3.8.CivicsPD2: Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate local, state, or national level.

- NJ Center for Civic Education: [Identifying the best solution to a public policy problem](#)

IV. How can individuals initiate change? What is an action plan? (1 week)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.2: Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate local, state or national level.

6.3.8.CivicsDP.1: Identify an issue of inequality, develop multiple solutions and communicate the best one to an appropriate government body.

6.3.8.CivicsPR.4: Use evidence and quantitative data to propose or defend a public policy related to climate change.

- NJ Center for Civic Education: [How can individuals and groups bring their concerns to public policymakers?](#)
- NJ Center for Civic Education: [Presenting your class plan](#)
- NJ Center for Civic Education: [Student Reflections](#)

V. Elections (3 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPI.4: Investigate the role of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information.

6.3.8.CivicsPR.5: Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.

6.3.8.CivicsPD.1: Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.

- Why are elections important? iCivics: [Voting Matters](#)
- [What are State Voting requirements?](#)
- How can you determine which candidate is the best qualified for the position?
 - iCivics: [How can we evaluate candidates for positions of authority?](#)
- Mock Primary Election: Instill the habit of participating in elections by having students research candidates and vote in the annual [New Jersey Mock Election](#), held each year two weeks prior to primary election day in June.

VI. What are the rights and responsibilities of citizenship? (2 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.3: Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse perspectives, and willing to take action on public issues.

- iCivics: [Citizen me](#)
- NJ Center for Civic Education: [What is Citizenship? What are the rights and responsibilities of citizens?](#)

VII. Why is civic engagement critical for a democratic society? (2 days)

6.3.8.CivicsPD.3: Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints and willing to take action on public issues.

What might happen if citizens do not participate in democratic government at the local, state, or federal levels? What can individuals do to help ensure that the American experiment with democracy continues? How does civic participation help our democracy evolve? What are the benefits of civic participation in a democracy?

- NJ Center for Civic Education: [Why should individuals participate in civic life?](#)

Performance Assessment: Presenting the class proposal (1 week)

6.3.8.CivicsPR.5: Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society

As a performance assessment, engage your students in preparing and presenting their class plan to improve their community at the local, state or national level to the actual legislative body or executive agency with the authority to make the change that the project requests. Students might also present their project at the annual [Project Citizen Showcase](#) sponsored by the New Jersey Center for Civic Education and held at Rutgers University in Piscataway each June.