

LESSON 6: Top Issues in the Community (2 Days)

Overview:

This lesson links the issues identified by students with issues of importance to other community members. Students will conduct initial surveys to see what issues are important to various community members.

Student Objectives:

- Conduct surveys with community members to identify top issues
- Contribute their survey data to the class master list
- Rank the top issues in their community in order of importance to them

Materials:

- Copies of Community Issues Survey
- Tallying Your Survey handout
- Blank chart paper
- Chart paper with list of issues from last lesson
- Surveying Strangers Script

Assessment:

- Community Issue Survey

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question or solve a problem.

Day 1



BELL-RINGER: Top issues (5 minutes)

Have students respond to the following question: “Based on the topics of the soapbox speeches, what are the three most important issues facing our community?”



BEFORE: Charting responses (5–10 minutes)

Document issues identified in the bell-ringer on chart paper. (Save this chart paper—you will use it again the following day.)

NOTE: You may need to clarify at this point what community you are talking about. Is it the neighborhood where the students live? Is it the school? Is it your city? Young people? Which community do students most want to impact?

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DURING: Explain survey procedure (10 minutes)

Have students read the Surveying Strangers Script (you can have volunteers act it out) and assess what the student did well and did poorly. Ask them what the student might do differently and ask volunteers to role play a more effective way to survey strangers.

Explain to students that we need to find out whether the issues identified by the class are the same issues that the community as a whole would identify as most important. In order to do this, we will need to survey members of our community to see what they think. Distribute the Community Issues Survey and explain the procedure for collecting information to students.

AFTER: Develop survey plan (10 minutes)

Have students write out a plan to survey 10 people. Will they do it in person? Who will they ask? If the class chooses an online survey, refer to the digital tools below.

NOTE: You may want to give students a few days to conduct surveys before doing the following lesson, or assign the survey for over the weekend.

Some students may live in a neighborhood where random door-knocking and loitering outside stores might not be safe. If this is the case, possible modifications for students include focusing just on the school community and interviewing students and school staff, or interviewing family members and friends. Remind these students that telephone interviews are completely acceptable.

DIGITAL TOOLS

Survey Monkey – <http://surveymonkey.com>

Survey Monkey is easy to use. The free version has a 10-question limit and 100-response limit per survey.

Kwik Surveys – <http://kwiksurveys.com>

The free version of Kwik Surveys allows for unlimited responses, but it contains advertising, it does not allow for open ended questions, it has no built in email distribution, it does not provide support, and the surveys are removed after six months.

More survey tools – <http://web.appstorm.net/roundups/18-awesome-survey-poll-apps/>

This site provides basic information about other survey and poll tools.

Facebook/Instagram – students can pose the question via sound media and have people respond.

Google Forms – If you want to email through Google, you have the option of using Google Forms to survey respondents.

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Day 2



BELL-RINGER: Compiling top issues (5 minutes)

Have students tally survey results from their community survey homework. Use the *Tallying Your Survey* handout, if students conducted paper and pen surveys.



BEFORE: Compile master issues list on the board (20–25 minutes)

Begin reviewing list of issues compiled by your class in the last lesson (saved on chart paper).

Next, have students share their top three issues from the homework and chart on the board. If there are repeat issues, put a hash mark next to the issue every time it is mentioned.



DURING: Narrow list to top ten/vote on top three (10–15 minutes)

Tally up the hash marks for each issue, and erase all but the top ten. Write the ten issues across the board and have ten students stand up at the board—one in front of each issue. Compare this list to the list of class-generated issues from the previous lesson. Note any overlap. Explain that we want to choose issues that we care about, and our best chance for success is if we have a broad base of support from the community as well.

Tell the students that they will now vote for their three favorite issues. Give each student three paper clips and explain that those are their votes. They can divide their votes any way they choose. For example, they can vote for one issue three times or for three separate issues. Have the students hand their paper clips to the student standing at the front of the room in front of the issue they want to vote for. Switch students so the ten students also get a chance to vote. Have the students count up the paper clips and tally the score. If there is a tie, allow for students to debate the issues and have a tie-breaker vote.

Explain to the students that they will divide into groups to do preliminary research, gather petition signatures, and represent one of the issues in a debate.

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AFTER: Exit ticket (5 minutes)

Have students rank the top three issues in order of importance to them. Explain to students that you will try to honor their preference as much as possible in assigning them to an issue group. Ideally students can be assigned to issues that they also feel strongly about but it may be hard to assign each student his/her passion for an issue. They will work in these issue groups for the next few lessons to prepare information and debate their issue.

If time is short...

- This lesson can be simplified by collecting the completed Community Issues Survey sheets and calculating the top ten issues on your own before beginning Lesson Two. Students can then vote in class to reduce the list to the top three issues.
- You can also have each student vote only once and have the three issues with the most votes become your top issues.
- Have students vote on their top issue without completing research at this stage (they will do research in the next step).

Choose an Issue

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

Surveying Strangers Script

STUDENT: Hey, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

CORNER GROCERY STORE OWNER: Hey kid, I'm working here, I don't have time for you playing around.

STUDENT: GEEEEZ! What's up with the attitude? I just wanted to ask what you think is wrong with our community.

STORE OWNER: Whose community? What are you talking about?

STUDENT: My teacher's making me do this lame assignment and I have to ask people what's wrong with our community.

STORE OWNER: You want me to criticize the neighborhood where my customers are? No way! That's bad for business. Tell your teacher our community is just fine and let me get back to work.

STUDENT: (Sarcastically.) Fine. Thanks for the help, jerk.

STORE OWNER: Get outta here kid.

STUDENT: Whatever. I'll buy my hot chips elsewhere.

In conducting an interview: What did the student do well? What did the student do poorly?

Choose an Issue

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Student Handout: Community Issues Survey

What are the issues that your community members consider the biggest problems? Interview people in your community to help get a better idea of what different people would like to see changed in the community.

Interview at least ten people. Interview different kinds of people. Select people who you think are likely to have different views. Interview people from at least five of the different categories that are listed below:

- Family member
- Person who lives and works in the neighborhood
- Teen
- Store owner
- Person in a leadership role (of an organization, church, government position, etc.)
- Elderly person
- Friend
- Person who does a service job in the neighborhood (postal worker, police, etc.)
- A person who has children

Name of person interviewed	Role in community	Their top three issues
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.

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Look at the surveys you completed for homework. Write down the issues of the people you surveyed. Each time the same issue is raised, put a hash mark next to it. When you are done, count up the hash marks and circle the three issues that had the most hash marks. See the sample below:

Top 2 issues = Teen Pregnancy, Bullying

Issues to Action