



SOLUTIONS CIVICS® - SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

UNIT 1: Introduction to Citizen Problem Solving

CLASS 1

OBJECTIVE:

Introduce students to the essential democratic value of citizen service and the civic pledge taken by young citizens of ancient Athens to “leave their city better than they found it...” and teach the new problem solving powers that elevate citizen service in the 21st century.

PROCESS:

- (A) Provide a brief history lesson on the practice, at the beginning of democracy, of young citizens who had just reached the age of maturity (today’s 18 year olds) gathering in the city square of the ancient democratic city/state of Athens to pledge to leave their city better than they found it and discuss the importance of “citizen service” to the vitality of democracy and the need to exercise your public voice in order to achieve the full measure of your humanity (see philosopher Hannah Arendt). Students should “google” the Athenian Pledge and comment on how they might be required to serve their city when they become 18 years old.
- (B) Teach students that new laws (OPRA & OPMA), adopted around the turn of the century, now give them the power to get the details of the current city/town policy on the issue of their interest and to publicly present their solutions to improve the existing policy – rights previously and largely reserved to elected officials.

In addition, teach students that these powers, when combined with the technological ability to search for and find evidence/success based solutions to city/town issues, gives them the ability to become problem solvers and “leave their city better than they found it.”

ASSESSMENT:

- (A) Did the students find background on the Athenian Pledge?
- (B) Ask students to explain why they have more power today than the 20th century powers of voting and protesting.

STUDENTS’ TAKE AWAY:

We have new powers that we can use to be problem solvers in our city and leave it better than we found it.



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CLASS 2

OBJECTIVE:

Teach students the three (3) principles of pragmatic problem solving and how they help avoid ideological gridlock and increase the likelihood that their solution will be adopted.

PROCESS:

Review the 3 principles and their explanations and view the 3 part 18 minute video on the No-Blame Problem Solving process which incorporates these principles. Provide a brief Q & A session after each part of the video.

ASSESSMENT:

Ask students to explain why cost effective solutions with proven success, advanced with a no-blame strategy, keep the focus on the solution and reduce the chances of their being marginalized when offering a solution for adoption by government officials.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

When you offer a solution to a local problem that is evidence-based, cost effective and advanced in a no blame way, you greatly increase the probability that it will be adopted.



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UNIT 1: Introduction to Citizen Problem Solving

CLASS 3

OBJECTIVE:

To teach students a step by step process for researching an evidence-based solution and shaping it for cost effectiveness and probable adoption.

PROCESS:

Break students into groups of approximately 6 students each in a variety of issue areas (e.g., public safety, environment, education, economic development, citizen empowerment) and ask them to follow Steps 1 – 6 of the No-Blame Problem Solving Guide.

ASSESSMENT:

Determine if students in each breakout group were able to drill down and define an issue focus, fill out an OPRA request for the current policy, search for an evidence-based solution and shape it into a “doable” solution for adoption in their city/town.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

- You can't solve a problem until you focus on the core of the issue that you care about.
- You need to know the current policy, if you're going to build on it with your solution.
- It's good to start with a practical first step; in other words, “do the doable.”



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UNIT 2: Implementing the Process of No Blame Problem Solving

CLASS 4

OBJECTIVE:

Teach students how to find evidence-based solutions without being misled by fake news or purported solutions without adequate proof of their success. Also, teach students how they can share solutions to current city/town issues through conventional and social media.

PROCESS:

Have students read *The 21st Century Citizens Manual* chapter on “Media Literacy and the Search for Solutions”, and ask them to identify an issue presently before one of the power centers and find and share an evidence-based solution to the issue.

ASSESSMENT:

Quiz students on how they found their solutions, and what steps they took to share them via social and conventional media.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

Understanding the importance of being able to distinguish real from fake news, will help them be effective problem-solvers.



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UNIT 2: Implementing the Process of No Blame Problem Solving

CLASS 5

OBJECTIVE:

Teach students how to use what they have learned thus far to prepare a respectful solutions presentation to a local government power center using the powers under OPMA.

PROCESS:

Ask students to prepare a respectful presentation of their solution to their choice of power centers following the steps in the No Blame Problem Solving Guide.

ASSESSMENT:

Review student's' plans for compliance with the city/town's local rules for citizen input and for compliance with the steps of the No Blame Problem Solving Guide.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

A respectful presentation that complements the current policy (or even a portion of the current policy) and is made in a no blame manner will keep the focus on your solution.



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UNIT 2: Implementing the Process of No Blame Problem Solving

CLASS 6

OBJECTIVE:

To teach students about the areas of responsibility of each of the principal local government decision-making arenas, and the ability to make final decisions of major impact (without the need for additional decision/votes by other government agencies) distinguishes these power centers as the main decision-making areas for problem-solving.

PROCESS:

Have students read Chapter 7 of The 21st Century Citizens Manual on the government power centers and learn about exercising their rights as citizens to participate in the decision-making process as problem solvers for issues confronting their city/town.

ASSESSMENT:

Ask students to choose the appropriate local government power center for advancing their solution.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

Major city government decisions are made in certain decision making arenas and we have legal rights to participate in their decision making processes.



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UNIT 2: Implementing the Process of No Blame Problem Solving

CLASS 7

OBJECTIVE:

Teach students about the local political parties and their legal rights to become a neighborhood party representative (called committee person or district leader) or to influence the current representative to prioritize their solutions in the party's platform and in the party's endorsement of candidates for elective and appointed office in their community.

PROCESS:

Ask students to find their neighborhood political party district on the election district map and identify the committee persons (aka district leaders) who presently represent them.

Also, discuss the section in Chapter 7 of The 21st Century Citizens Manual on local Political Parties and discuss their legal rights with respect to the local political party and its elected neighborhood representatives.

ASSESSMENT:

Quiz students on their election district number and current political representatives for both parties. Also, quiz students on the rights of party representatives to elect their leaders and adopt a party constitution setting forth their platform and endorsement powers.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

Local political parties have neighborhood representatives (1 male and 1 female) who can vote on the wording of party endorsements and adopt platform solution priorities.



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UNIT 2: Implementing the Process of No Blame Problem Solving

CLASS 8

OBJECTIVE:

Teach students about the student opportunities for citizen leadership service and for pursuing solutions implementation, including Appointed Official and Neighborhood Political Party Representative (aka committee person or district leader).

PROCESS:

Have students read The 21st Century Citizens Manual, chapter 8, about non-elected citizen leadership roles; assign them the task of choosing an Appointed Official Position which interests them from the Directory of city/town boards and commissions and have them fill out an application form for that position. Also require that they fill out the Petition form to run for Neighborhood Political Party Representative (aka committee person or district leader).

ASSESSMENT:

Review their Appointed Office application form and Political Party Representative petitions and quiz them on the appropriate person or agency with whom to file their forms.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

You can easily become a leader in different ways, often requiring nothing more than your decision to lead.



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UNIT 3: Presentation and Pursuit of Successful Solutions

CLASS 9

OBJECTIVE:

To have students utilize what they have learned to make a presentation of the solutions developed in their group.

PROCESS:

Have students from each group make a presentation to a mock local government power center comprised of students not involved in presenting, and have the presenting group describe their plans for respectful pursuit of implementation of their solutions.

ASSESSMENT:

Review their presentations and their respectful pursuit plans for compliance with the steps of the No Blame Problem Solving Guide.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

Practicing “presenting” in front of your classmates will help you give a more effective live performance in front of your government representatives and the public when the time comes!

Presenting your solution is like learning to ride a bike; you have to practice a few times before you take it on the road.



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UNIT 3: Presentation and Pursuit of Successful Solutions

CLASS 10

OBJECTIVE:

To deepen the understanding of the No Blame Problem Solving process across multiple issues/solutions and a variety of respectful pursuit plans.

PROCESS:

Ask students to evaluate the presentations and respectful pursuit plans of other breakout groups for compliance with the 10 Step No Blame Problem Solving Guide and how the presentations and plans would affect them if they were a member of the reviewing local government power center.

ASSESSMENT:

Determine how well the students have absorbed the readings from The 21st Century Citizens Manual and the No Blame Problem Solving Guide in their evaluations of their fellow students' presentations and plans for respectful pursuit of their solutions implementation.

STUDENTS' TAKE AWAY:

You are ready to take an active leadership role in your city if you know your legal rights to participate in the decision making process and you know how to find, develop, and present a practical solution.