

Overview

In a democracy, people make group decisions that shape their governments. In this activity, students will explore the characteristics of a democratic society, how government impacts people of all ages, and begin to think of ways they can take informed civic action to improve where they live and be part of democracy. Students will make real life connections to the content.

Estimated time

30 minutes (can modify to fit time available)

Objectives

- Students explore concepts of a democratic society
- Students work in groups to brainstorm how government impacts people of all ages and how kids can take informed civic action to help shape government and play a role in democracy
- Students write a paragraph or make a slide about this topic, share, discuss, and ask/answer questions of peers
- Students make real life connections to the content

Introduction (5 minutes)

- Ask students: How many of you have heard of the word “democracy”? Does anyone know what it means? What other words do you think of when you hear the word democracy? List the students’ ideas on the board or document.

Activity 1 (5 minutes)

Ask students:

- What do you think this statement means: In a democracy, the people play a role in making many of the decisions about what happens in their communities, states, and country.
- How do people in our community (or you could say in the United States) make decisions about or get involved in our governments, our schools, our laws, and other things that impact our lives every day?
 - Possible answers include keeping up with news, attending government or school board meetings, communicating our ideas with officials, running for elected office, and voting.

Activity 2 (20 minutes)

Ask students:

- Is democracy just for adults? Does democracy have anything to do with kids? (Yes!)
- Point out differences
 - How democracy impacts people (example: laws made by our local, state, and federal governments impact most of our everyday activities, including being at school).
 - And how people impact democracy (by voting, communicating with officials, etc. about these laws)
- Divide the class into small groups
 - In groups, students
 - Brainstorm 1 way government impacts kids and 1 way that kids can participate in democracy to help shape government.
 - Together compose a short paragraph or slide about why students should care about democracy and a way kids can get involved.

■ Example:

- City leaders are thinking about building a playground or a store on an empty lot. Kids want places to play and can send emails to officials explaining to them why playgrounds are good.
- Ask groups to share with the class.
- Discuss, encouraging students to ask questions of peers.