



African-American Youth Involvement in Civic Affairs: A Social Action Framework for Community and Civic Engagement

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Connections to Middle and High School

The major objectives of this unit are understanding and appreciating the function of community engagement within African-American culture. In order to understand and to appreciate the role community and civic engagement (e.g., voting) play in African-American culture, students must learn about contemporary and historical elements and traditions that shaped African-American communities. The lesson will provide teachers with an effective tool to help their students become change agents for civic, community, and global reform. Community and civic engagement leads to personal responsibility, giving back, and maintaining personal identity while being a member of a community and a citizen of a country.

Goal:

Demonstrate how to incorporate each of the stages of the Transtheroretical Model of Change, emphasizing Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente's (1994) Stages of Change model, to spark social action.

Students will develop a greater awareness and appreciation of community and civic engagement. They will understand how their involvement affects the functioning of their family, community, society, country and world.

Objectives:

The student will

1. develop an appreciation of community and civic engagement.
2. have personal self-esteem and pride.
3. improve critical thinking skills.
4. improve skills such as note-taking, interviewing, and conducting research.



National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Standards

- Assist learners in developing historical research capabilities that enable them to formulate historical questions, obtain historical data, question historical data, identify the gaps in available records, place records in context, and construct sound historical interpretations
- Help learners to identify issues and problems in the past, recognize factors contributing to such problems, identify and analyze alternative courses of action, formulate a position or course of action, and evaluate the implementation of that decision.
- Enable learners to develop historical understanding through the avenues of social, political, economic, and cultural history, and the history of science and technology.

Teachers' Facilitation of Students Transitioning

Through Stages of Transtheoretical Model of Change (TMC)

- 1. Pre-contemplation to the contemplation** stage by increased awareness through goal setting. Establishing goals that are realistic, simple, immediate, and easily attained increases students' self-efficacy and confidence in their ability.
 - educating students on community and civic engagement
 - providing examples of local and famous African-American civic leaders

Level 1 — Pre-contemplation

Goal — Raise student awareness of civic engagement.

1. Provide examples of local and national African-American civic leaders from both the past and present. Please consider using the following resources:
 - a. Frederick Douglass, "The Race Problem,"
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/politics/text2/douglass.pdf>
 - b. Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address,"
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/WASHINGTON/ch14.htm>
 - c. "The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It,"
<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/protest/text5/>



- d. “Fannie Lou Hammer: Woman of Courage,”
<http://www.howard.edu/library/reference/guides/hamer/default.htm>
 - e. Research local, state, and national African-American political leaders. The Congressional Black Caucus website is an excellent starting place for the study of present African American leaders.
http://www.house.gov/kilpatrick/cbc/member_info.html
2. In the **contemplation stage**, there is awareness of the need to be involved, but there may be some ambivalence and some hesitancy toward active advocacy. Older students may already be aware of the rewards and tribulations of being involved in civic and community affairs and may have made plans to be active based on their understanding of the benefits. While it may be encouraging involvement, they may not know how to be most effective and may encounter barriers. For example, the students may not have the resources (skills, confidence, and networks) to implement their goals.
- Therefore, students in this stage may need extra attention and extra patience. They need to go at their own pace. Educators can use gentle prompting, encouragement, and motivation techniques and develop unique and specific strategies to move them to the next stage. Although there is no commitment to action, an educator’s role is to address hesitancy, encourage a process of self-re-evaluation, and gently guide the students through the process toward action.
 - Fact-finding mission — find out what events such as elections and new projects are upcoming in their communities.

Level 2 — Contemplation

Goal — Facilitate the exploration of opportunities available to students for civic engagement.

1. Review agendas for upcoming city, county, or local school board meetings for topics of interest.
2. Read and review the editorial pages of the local newspaper for issues of concern.



3. Discuss areas of concern within the community that may be of interest to students.
4. Brainstorm ways students can become engaged in the political process, such as writing letters to state and national representatives, volunteering for a local or national political campaign, volunteering for a political party, etc.

3. The **preparation stage** combines intention with behavior. Students in this stage are most ready for advocacy. It is the responsibility of the educator to support the students by helping them to identify developmentally appropriate ways they can effect change in their community. The educator's role (depending on the age and developmental level of the student) is to focus on each student's specific areas of interest, such as voter registration and volunteerism, and to provide them with the necessary resources to help them achieve their goals. For example, they may be matched with other young people who have had similar goals and been successful. Providing students with immediate and frequent encouragement and feedback is important. A tangible product — a notebook, journal, poem, choreopoem, procast, or final report on the experience — is important.

- Complete individual and small-group projects such as constructing a diagram of community organizations or writing a community civic history related to community engagement.

Level 3 — Preparation

Goal – Support students in exploring resources available to assist them in identifying developmentally appropriate ways they can effect change in their community.

1. Invite a member of your local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) branch to speak to students about the organization and its role in civic engagement at the local and national level. <http://www.naacp.org/unitfinder/index.htm>
2. Invite a representative from the National Urban League to discuss their organization's involvement in your community. <http://www.nul.org/affiliatelistings.html>



3. Invite local African-American leaders to speak to your class about civic involvement through their organization within the community.

4. During the **action stage**, students' behavior, environment, and experiences are modified. The educator's role is to assist each student in the implementation of his or her goals. Encouragement and praise are given for small successes, and educators validate and support their students' efforts and help them to create supportive networks.

- Go on field trips to visit historical sites in the African-American community.

Level 4 — Action

Goal — Support and assist students in the implementation of their specific individual goals related to civic involvement.

1. Take a field trip to historical sites for the African-American community. The Freedom's Song web site contains links to cultural centers, historic sites, memorials, monuments, and museums across the nation. Additionally, teachers can order a free copy of the *Freedom's Song* DVD and lesson plans through the web site:

<http://www.freedomssong.net/resources.html>

In the **maintenance stage**, students' self-efficacy is at its peak. Students continue to learn and to grow, and this stage can last for the rest of their lives. They are empowered and have the necessary resources to be change agents for their communities. Activities may include the following:

- organizing mock voter registrations, organizing volunteers to work in civic events, or giving public speeches in classrooms within their school
- working with local community groups, churches, or Boys and Girls clubs, or doing voter registrations, community organizing, and community clean-ups

Level 5 — Maintenance

Goal — reinforcement and continued encouragement of the civic engagement of students

1. Encourage awareness of and engagement in civic activities among their peers.



2. Organize school-wide opportunities for community involvement or partnerships with neighboring schools.
3. Organize mentoring activities with younger students to increase awareness of and engagement in civic activities.

The **termination state** occurs only when there is confidence that the students are successful and autonomous in their current and future civic and community engagement goals. The intervention is successful when students are able to understand community issues and set short-term and long-term goals. Constant reinforcement from different sources is also beneficial.

- Develop a lifetime commitment to volunteer in their communities.

Ideally, this unit will be tailored to meet the needs of not only individual students, but also individual communities. Customizing lessons to include an emphasis on community issues provides students with authentic opportunities to observe and to engage in civic and social action while simultaneously making connections with national and global issues, resulting in lifelong social action.