

LESSON 2: Taking a Stand on Public Policy

6th Grade Social Studies

LESSON DESCRIPTION: Students practice taking a stand on a local or hypothetical public policy issue. Then, they consider data about screen use, take a stand, and write a persuasive essay to support their stand

FOCUS QUESTIONS: What are examples of public policy issues? How do you support your stand on a public policy issue?

OBJECTIVE: Students will:

- Students will take a stand in writing on a public policy issue.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

- **READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6–12**
 - * **CCSS.6-8.RH.2** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
 - * **CCSS.6-8.RH.7** Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- **WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS 6–12**
 - * **CCSS.6-8.WHST.1b** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. **b.**Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
 - * **CCSS.6-8.WHST.9** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

LENGTH OF LESSON: one class period

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Piece of string or adding machine tape to go across the room
- Two signs, YES and NO, positioned at opposite ends of the yes/no line
- Taking a stand persuasive essay handouts (Data Section, Taking a stand, Core Democratic Values sheet, and answer sheets)

PROCEDURES

Activity 1: Students will practice taking a stand

1. Tell the story about a problem that has arisen that needs a public policy solution. It is most effective to use something from current events. Or, use the following:

Teenagers in a small city use the steps of the county courthouse to practice skateboarding. This has resulted in damage to the steps. The damage was repaired once and a sign - "NO SKATEBOARDING ON COURTHOUSE STEPS" – was posted. Within a week, the steps were damaged again. The city council decided that a public policy was needed to solve the problem.

2. **Show Students:**

- A line across the classroom that will be used as a continuum.
- A YES placard at one end and a NO placard at the other end.

3. **Ask Students:** Should the city pass an ordinance banning skateboarding in public places?

- Students should think about this, then take a position on the line, toward either end.
- Students should not be near the middle, as this indicates *not* taking a stand.

4. **Ask Students:**

- What is one reason you chose your position? Alternate ends.
- What is a Core Democratic Value that relates to your position, and how does it relate?

Activity 2: Students will take a stand in writing

1. Tell the students they are going to take a stand on a public policy issue about screen use for students.
2. Hand out a Core Democratic Value sheet (or have them refer to a poster in the classroom), the data section with the prompt, and answer sheets. Make sure each student has a pencil.

You may wish to set a time limit for writing the essay. A state test limit is approximately 12 minutes.

3. Grade the responses using the 9th grade Constructed Response Social Studies rubric from the Michigan Department of Education. Hand back papers. **Close the activity as follows:**

4. **Ask students:**

- Go to a spot on the yes/no line that indicates your stand on the issue.
- Support your stand with data, prior knowledge, or a Core Democratic Value
- Who is right about this? Should the proposed public policy be altered? How?

Teacher's Note: Take comments from a number of students, alternating yes and no stances.

PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Directions: Read the following information about a public policy issue. Use it with what you already know to complete the writing task that follows. You should take about 10 minutes to write the answer.

Over the last 40 years there has been a large increase in TV programs aimed at children. Because of the concern over the health risks of children watching too much TV a bill has been introduced that would reduce the amount of time that TV stations could have programs aimed at children.

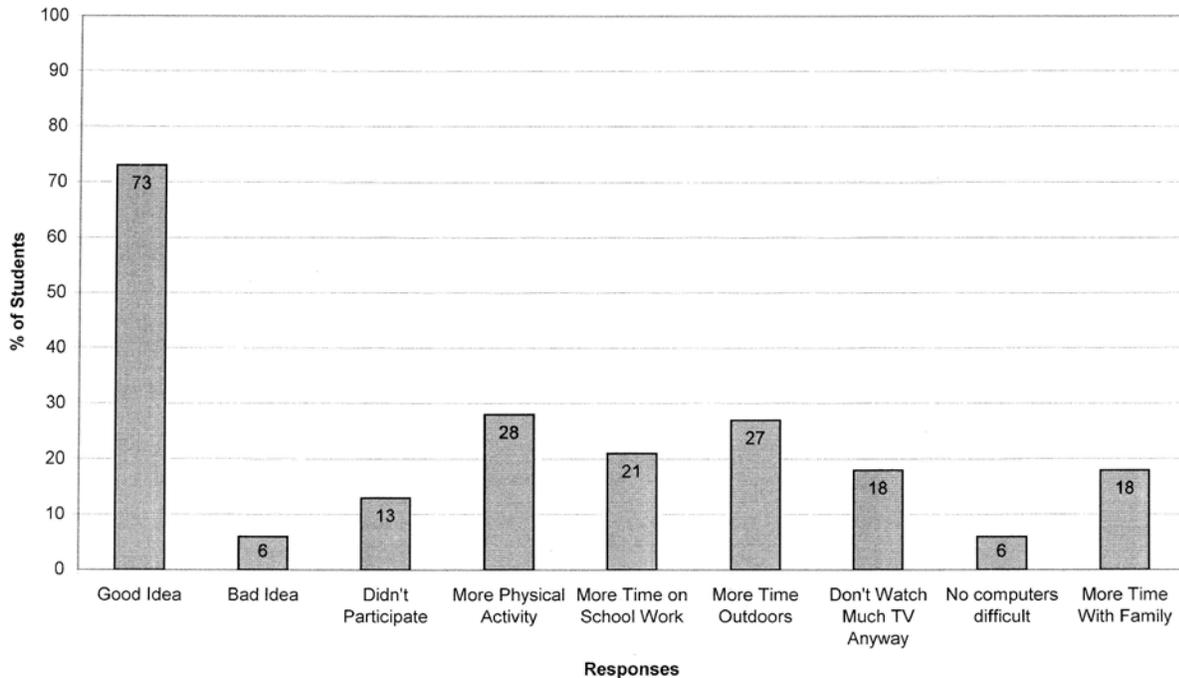
Should there be legislation that would limit the amount of time that TV stations could have programs aimed at children?

DATA SECTION

PART A

The 6th, 7th and 8th graders at a small Michigan middle school had the option to participate in a seven day Screen-Free Challenge. Afterwards, the 89 students were asked to write a paragraph about the experience. Their written comments were tallied into categories shown on the bar graph below. A student's paragraph could get several tallies, depending on how they responded.

**Middle School Students' Comments
About Their TV Turn-Off Program**



PART B

A study of 1000 people in the nation looked at TV viewing habits and snack eating. The results, in the table below, are average amounts per week.

Hours of TV watched	Snack calories consumed	Money spent on snacks
1 – 5	340	\$1.99
6 – 10	980	\$5.49
11 – 15	1730	\$11.18
16 – 20	2650	\$21.63
21 - 25	3860	\$32.79

TAKING A STAND

You will now take a stand on the following public policy issue.

Should there be a legislation that would limit the amount of time that TV stations could have programs aimed at children?

You may either support or oppose the proposal. Write a letter to the school board. Use information from the Data Section to provide reasons that support your position.

You will be scored on the following criteria. Your letter must include:

- a clear and supported statement of your position;
- supporting information using a core democratic value of American constitutional democracy; and
- supporting information from the Data Section.

Remember to: Use complete sentences.
Explain your reasons in detail.
Explain how the core democratic value you use connects to your position.
Write or print neatly on the lines provided on the answer sheets. No additional sheets may be used.

9th Grade
Scoring of Constructed Response
MEAP Social Studies Rubric

Points	Description
4	<p>The supporting core democratic value, data, and prior knowledge component used by students must be explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken in order to receive credit.</p> <p>In order to receive a 4-point score, the response must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated position on the issue and support their position. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept those who do not take a stand, who say someone else (parents, school, or government) should decide. 2. Provide at least one supporting point that is based on core democratic values of American constitutional democracy that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position. 3. Provide one (or more) piece(s) of accurate, valid, and relevant supporting information from the Data Section that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position. 4. Provide one (or more) piece(s) of accurate, valid, and relevant supporting social studies information that comes from the student’s prior knowledge (information other than that supplied by the Data Section or a Core Democratic Value) that is explained in enough detail to show a clear connection to the position taken. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not accept feelings or opinions. Support must be factual. - Do not accept if this support contradicts stated position.
3	<p>In order to receive a 3-point score, the response must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated position on the issue with support for their position. 2. Contain at least 2 of the remaining 3 elements listed above.
2	<p>In order to receive a 2-point score, the response must.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated and supported position on the issue. 2. Contain at least 1 of the remaining 3 elements listed above.
1	<p>In order to receive a 1-point score, the response must</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give a clearly stated and supported position on the issue.
0	Response shows no evidence of a clear position or the position is not supported in any way.

Core Values of American Constitutional Democracy

Core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society which unite all Americans. These values are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and other significant documents, speeches, and writings of the nation. Below are definitions of some core democratic values.

Source: CIVITAS: A Framework for Civic Education, a collaborative project of the Center for Civic Education and the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship, National Council for the Social Studies Bulletin No 86, 1991.

Fundamental Beliefs

Life The individual's right to life should be considered inviolable except in certain highly restricted and extreme circumstances, such as the use of deadly force to protect one's own or others' lives.

Liberty The right to liberty is considered an unalterable aspect of the human condition. Central to this idea of liberty is the understanding that the political or personal obligations of parents or ancestors cannot be legitimately forced on people. The right to liberty includes: **Personal Freedom** - The private realm in which the individual is free to act, to think, and to believe, and which the government cannot legitimately invade. **Political Freedom** -The right to participate freely in the political process, choose and remove public officials, to be governed under a rule of law, the right to a free flow of information and ideas, open debate, and right of assembly. **Economic Freedom** - The right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of private property without unreasonable governmental interference, the right to seek employment wherever one pleases, to change employment at will, and to engage in any lawful economic activity.

The Pursuit of Happiness It is the right of citizens in the American constitutional democracy to attempt to attain (pursue) happiness in their own way, so long as they do not infringe upon rights of others.

Common Good The public or common good requires that individual citizens have the commitment and motivation (that they accept their obligation) to promote the welfare of the community and to work together with other members for the greater benefit of all.

Justice People should be treated fairly in the distribution of the benefits and burdens of society, the correction of wrongs and injuries, and in the gathering of information and making of decisions.

Equality All citizens have **political equality** and are not denied these rights unless by due process of law; **legal equality** and should be treated as equals before the law; **social equality** so as there should be no class hierarchy sanctioned by law; and **economic equality** which tends to strengthen political and social equality for extreme economic inequality tends to undermine all other forms of equality and should therefore be avoided.

Diversity Variety in culture and ethnic background, race, lifestyle, and belief is not only permissible but desirable and beneficial in a pluralist society.

Truth Citizens can legitimately demand that truth-telling as refraining from lying and full disclosure by government be the rule, since trust in the veracity of government constitutes an essential element of the bond between governors and governed.

Popular Sovereignty The citizenry is collectively the sovereign of the state and holds ultimate authority over public officials and their policies.

Patriotism Virtuous citizens display a devotion to their country, including devotion to the fundamental values and principles upon which it depends.

Constitutional Principles

Rule of Law Both government and the governed should be subject to the law.

Separation of Powers Legislative, executive, and judicial powers should be exercised by different institutions in order to maintain the limitations placed upon them.

Representative Government The republican form of government established under the Constitution is one in which citizens elect others to represent their interests.

Checks and Balances The powers given to the different branches of government should be balanced, that is roughly equal, so that no branch can completely dominate the others. Branches of government are also given powers to check the power of other branches.

Individual Rights Fundamental to American constitutional democracy is the belief that individuals have certain basic rights that are not created by government but which government should protect. These are the right to life, liberty, economic freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. It is the purpose of government to protect these rights, and it may not place unfair or unreasonable restraints on their exercise. Many of these rights are enumerated in the Bill of Rights.

Freedom of Religion There shall be full freedom of conscience for people of all faiths or none. Religious liberty is considered to be a natural inalienable right that must always be beyond the power of the state to confer or remove. Religious liberty includes the right to freely practice any religion or no religion without government coercion or control.

Federalism Power is shared between two sets of governmental institutions, those of the states and those of the central or federal authorities, as stipulated by the Constitution.

Civilian Control of the Military Civilian authority should control the military in order to preserve constitutional government.

YES

NO