

USC Democracy Project Curriculum Guide

Overview

The United States of America has long stood as a symbol of democracy around the world. Yet today, deep political divisions in our country threaten our commitment to democratic pluralism and civil liberty. As our political divisions deepen and disagreements on issues become more acrimonious, we recognize the urgent need to prepare students to engage in civil discourse and participate in democracy at all levels—local, state, national, and international. The USC Democracy Project curriculum has been designed to provide students with an examination of diverse perspectives, engagement in deliberative discourse, and authentic opportunities for civic action. This curriculum outlines a vision for equity in schools that is grounded in the belief that civic engagement contributes to equitable outcomes across society.

The curriculum utilizes a deliberative inquiry model to support students in taking civic action toward important issues of public concern. Each module is organized by an overarching issue and compelling question. Modules begin with background lessons that provide students with opportunities to develop an understanding of the public issue. Additionally, modules contain a deliberation event, where students examine a range of perspectives and deliberate on how best to address the public issue. Thereafter, modules provide guidance on supporting students in identifying a specific issue of interest to analyze further. The civic action components task students with deliberating civic actions to address a public problem, develop a plan of action, carry out those planned actions, and reflect on the process. Every module has been flexibly designed to allow for teacher adaptations that support the needs of students.



Key Features

Standards Alignment

The curriculum has been created to be aligned to several standards, including the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3), Common Core Standards for History-Social Science, International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, and relevant state history content and English language development standards. Standard alignment guides may be found in the module resources.

Access and Equity

In order to meet the needs of all students, curricular materials have been designed to provide equitable access to students. Lesson guides include accessibility strategies that offer students equitable learning opportunities by providing approaches that can be adapted to student needs and preferences. Moreover, student resources have been formatted to consider student needs by aligning them to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0. Additionally, each lesson includes guidance for differentiation. Lesson guides provide considerations for supporting learner needs, such as readiness, interest, and English language proficiency.

Community Connections

Each lesson guide contains recommendations for leveraging community assets into the scope of learning and tasking students with engaging with others in the community to better understand issues of public concern.

Digital Options

Besides printable material options throughout the curriculum, each lesson guide provides suggestions for utilizing technology to support student learning outcomes.

California State Seal of Civic Engagement

The curriculum has been designed to meet key criteria of the California State Seal of Civic Engagement. For more information about the CA State Seal of Civic Engagement, please visit the CA Department of Education [here](#).

Modular Design

The Democracy Project curriculum consists of six modules that can be taught in a variety of ways. Three suggested pathways exist for implementing the curriculum: (1) Teacher-Directed, (2) Student-Centered, and (3) Deliberations. While the teacher-directed pathway allows each lesson to be taught with a single class, the student-directed pathway supports student inquiry into public issues. Alternatively, if constrained by time, the deliberations pathway enables students to participate in deliberative experiences to explore multiple perspectives on how best to address public concerns.

Modules

Module	Compelling Question	Lessons	Suggest Pacing
1. Human Rights	What is our responsibility for the protection of human rights?	7	2 weeks
2. Police & Safety	How do we keep our neighborhood safe for everyone?	6	2 weeks
3. Gun Violence	How should we prevent gun violence in our community?	6	2 weeks
4. Immigration	What should be the immigration policy of the United States?	6	2 weeks
5. Hate Speech	How should we respond to hate speech in our community?	6	2 weeks
6. Climate Change	How should we meet the challenge of a warming planet in our community?	6	2 weeks