Civic Action Inquiry

How Will I Make a Change?

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Supporting Questions

1. What do people need to know about my issue/problem?
2. What can be done about my issue/problem?
3. What can I do about my issue/problem?
4. What challenges could I face?

Civic Action Inquiry

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| How Will I Make a Change? | |
| Kentucky Academic Standards for Social Studies | 8.I.CC.4 Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions about ways to take action on current local, regional and global issues. |
| Staging the Question | Students determine an issue or problem that is of interest to them. |

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| Supporting Question 1 |  | Supporting Question 2 |  | Supporting Question 3 |  | Supporting Question 4 |
| UNDERSTAND |  | ASSESS |  | PLAN |  | **EVALUATE** |
| What do people need to know about my issue/problem? |  | What can be done about my issue/problem? |  | What can I do about my issue/problem? |  | What challenges could I face? |
| Formative  Performance Task |  | Formative  Performance Task |  | Formative  Performance Task |  | Formative  Performance Task |
| Using the graphic organizer, create a list of things people should know about your issue/problem. |  | Using the graphic organizer, decide how people can address your issue/problem. |  | Using the graphic organizer, construct an argument and plan to act using at least one claim and piece of evidence from the inquiry |  | Evaluate possible challenges you may face and create a claim to add to your argument. |
| Featured Sources |  | Featured Sources |  | Featured Sources |  | Featured Sources |
| *News databases:*  **Source A:** *Scholastic News*  **Source B:** *Time for Kids*  **Source C:** *Newsela* |  | Previous task’s resources  *Students select 1-2 additional sources from the news databases to assess how people are currently addressing the issue.* |  |  |  |  |

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| Summative Performance Tasks | Argument How will I make a change? Construct an argument about how they will make change, including a step-by-step plan with anticipated timeline. |
| Act Implement the taking informed civic action plan in a way that shares the project with others. |
| Extension Reflect on the experience noting what you learned from the project and what you might do differently next time. |

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| Overview |

## Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of how they can make an impact on their community. By investigating the compelling question, students examine an issue that is important to them, assess what can be done to help with the issue, plan ways they can take action on their issue, and evaluate potential challenges. By completing this inquiry, students begin to understand ways in which they can be citizens and take informed action in meaningful ways.

*Suggested Resources:*

* *Time for Kids* and *Scholastic News* provide news articles for students based on age/ability level. Subscription required.
* *Newsela* provides news articles adapted to different ability levels. Requires a free account.

## Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “How will I make a change?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

This inquiry is expected to take six to twelve 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Inquiries are not scripts, so teachers are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

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| Staging the Compelling Question | |
| Staging Question | What is something important to me? |
| Staging Task | Students determine an issue or problem that is of interest to them. |

For the inquiry’s staging, teachers should help students consider what issue, problem, or general topic is of interest to them. In order to help prompt students, teachers may want to provide students access to news resources geared towards students, such as those included in the featured sources. To help students consider different ideas, teachers can have them organize their thoughts using the included handout, which has students write down a topic idea, why it’s an important issue, and why they chose it (or why they think it is important and/or interesting). Teachers may also want to provide categories to help students generate a list of topics (e.g., the environment, the school, how people treat one another, etc.).

*See Handout 1*

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| Supporting Question 1: UNDERSTAND | |
| Supporting Question | What do people need to know about my issue/problem? |
| Formative Performance Task | Using the graphic organizer, create a list of things people should know about the issue/problem. |
| Featured Sources | **Source A:** *Scholastic News*  This publication provides news articles for students based on age/ability level. Subscription required. Accessed from: <https://sn3.scholastic.com/> |
| **Source B:** *Time for Kids*  This publication provides news articles for students based on age/ability level. Subscription required. Accessed from: <https://www.timeforkids.com/> |
| **Source C:** *Newsela*  *Newsela* provides news articles from major publications, adapted to different ability levels. Requires a free account. Accessed from: <https://newsela.com/> |

In the first supporting question—“What do people need to know about my issue/problem?”—students will answer questions to help them understand their chosen issue/problem. Teachers will want to provide access to resources for students to research the topic. The formative performance task has students use a graphic organizer to create a list of things people should know about their topic. These questions were designed to help students understand the cause and impact of the issue in order to prepare them for the subsequent supporting questions. Accompanying the graphic organizer are fill-in-the-blank sentences to help students construct claims about their topic. This structure helps students articulate their ideas clearly and easily, while also preparing them for their final summative project.

*See Handout 2*

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| Supporting Question 2: ASSESS | |
| Supporting Question | What can be done about my issue/problem? |
| Formative Performance Task | Using the graphic organizer, decide how people can address your issue/problem. |
| Featured Sources | See previous tasks’ resources. *Students select 1-2 additional sources from the news databases to assess how people are currently addressing the issue.* |

For the second supporting question—“What can be done about my issue/problem?”—students will assess their topic by considering what is needed to help, determine what people are currently doing to address the topic, potential challenges there could be in addressing the topic, and determining who could help them. Students should select 1-2 additional sources from the news databases to assess how people are currently addressing the issue. Much like the previous inquiries on student activists, this portion of the inquiry has students consider what needs to be done, while also balancing the potential risks or difficulties. This is a crucial step in taking informed action, as not all acts of civic engagement are problem-free. Additionally, by having students consider who can help them, this task provides space for students to not only consider how they may collaborate with peers, but also determine who may be a stakeholder, such as a politician or other leader in political, social, or economic organizations. As with the previous task, this graphic organizer is followed by fill-in-the-blank sentences to help students construct claims about their topic.

*See Handout 3*

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| Supporting Question 3: PLAN | |
| Supporting Question | What can I do about my issue/problem? |
| Formative Performance Task | Using the graphic organizer, construct an argument and plan to act using at least one claim and piece of evidence from the inquiry |
| Featured Sources | *See previous tasks’ resources.* |

For the third supporting question—“What can I do about my issue/problem?”—students construct an argument about how they can take action using an evidence-based claim from the inquiry. Students proceed through a graphic organizer to select possible ways they can take informed action. This portion is divided into three steps to help students determine how to best address their issue/problem. The items included on the list were chosen to be comprehensive, but not too overwhelming. Teachers are encouraged to add/subtract from the list.  
  
**STEP 1: BE CONNECTED**  
To be connected, students connect to stakeholders, by determining who is affected, who can bring change, and who else can help them in this civic action. Teachers can have students refer back to their work from the previous supporting questions and potentially make revisions. (*See Handout 4*)

**STEP 2: BE INFORMED / BE ENGAGED / BE A LEADER / BE THE CHANGE**  
Students determine the type of action they would like to take. In the instructions for this handout, students are asked to think about things they like to do when choosing a possible action.

This portion of the task is divided into four types of actions. To help decide the action, teachers should encourage students to think about what they enjoy doing, as well as how they can engage with their fellow students. Depending on their choices, students may find some actions overlap. (*See Handout 5*)

* To BE INFORMED, students learn about an issue and communicate that learning in some way.
* To BE ENGAGED, students engage with others on an issue. This can mean having an informed conversation, as well as volunteering on behalf of the issue/problem.
* To BE A LEADER, students organize an action to address their issue/problem.
* To BE THE CHANGE, students seek transformation, meaning they take an action that will address the root cause of their issue/problem.

**STEP 3: BE A VOICE**  
Students determine the "level of sharing," or the size of the audience they would like to reach. Determining the audience or scope of the issue helps narrow down where (or with whom) the action should be shared.

As with the previous task, this graphic organizer is followed by fill-in-the-blank sentences to help students construct claims about their topic. (*See Handout 6*)

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| Supporting Question 4: EVALUATE | |
| Supporting Question | What challenges could I face? |
| Formative Performance Task | Evaluate possible challenges you may face and create a claim to add to your argument. |
| Featured Sources | *See previous tasks’ resources.* |

For the fourth supporting question—What challenges could I face?—students will use the previous supporting questions’ formative performance tasks to evaluate possible challenges they may encounter when trying to address their chosen issue/problem. For the fourth performance task, students will create a list of possible challenges and what they will do if it happens. Then students write a series of claims about how they will face your challenge(s) to be added to their argument. To assist with this task, students will use the graphic organizer and accompanying fill-in-the-blank claim statements.

*See Handout 7*

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| Summative Performance Task | |
| Summative Performance Task | ARGUMENT How will I make a change? Construct an argument about how they will make change, including a step-by-step plan with anticipated timeline. |

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined an issue important to them, assessed what changes need to be made and potential ways to help. Then, students created an action plan to make a change on their topic. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument to answer the compelling question “How will I make a change?”

It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay. For example, rather than have students express their evidence-based arguments through formal, written essays, teachers may wish to have students sketch out their responses to the compelling question in a chart or list form. Handout 8 provides an organizational framework for students to write a summative argument compiling previous work from the formative tasks.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

* BE INFORMED: Even though not everyone agrees with me on this issue, I can make a change by raising awareness on my issue by talking to parents, writing an article for the school newsletter, or making a video to share about my issue.
* BE ENGAGED: Even though raising money is difficult, I can make a change by contributing to a donation drive or charity and volunteering for a cause related to my issue.
* BE A LEADER: Even though it will take a lot of hard work, I can make a change by working with my classmates to organize a donation drive related to my issue.
* BE THE CHANGE: Even though there are people who disagree with me, I can make a change by writing a letter to the mayor about how my city can help address my issue.

To *act*, students should implement the taking informed civic action plan in a way that shares the project with others. This should include creating a timeline (Handout 9). Teachers are encouraged to have students document their project through taking pictures and writing personal reflections. By reflecting on the civic engagement project, teachers and students will have space to not only consider what went well and did not, but also to encourage one another’s efforts.

For the extension task, students can reflect on the experience noting what they learned from the project and what they might do differently next time.