

3-5

# CULMINATING ACTIVITY: GO ASK CITY HALL! (1 hour)

## **OBJECTIVE**

Students propose a park improvement or a similar youth-centered plan of action and walk through the processes of democracy and governance.

## MATERIALS

Maps of the community; markers, pens and paper; letter writing materials

## **GET READY**

- ✓ Obtain a map of the community from a source such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- ✓ Obtain a map (or create one) of the neighborhood immediately surrounding the school.
- ✓ Gather markers, pens, and paper.
- ✓ Divide your students into groups of four.
- ✓ Distribute the copy of the community map to each group.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Ask each group of students to imagine they are walking around the different areas featured on the map. Say, *What features of the town could be improved for the children living there?* (Ex. creating a new library, a new park, a new play-ground, etc.) Each group should discuss some possibilities and then design and illustrate a project idea for a part of the community.
- ✓ After the students present their responses, give each group a copy of the map of the school's immediate neighborhood.
- Say, Let's look at our school's neighborhood.
  What is one small improvement in this part of town that could help children? (Emphasize the importance of choosing a smaller project, like a new piece of playground equipment in a park or a street sign close to school.)

- ✓ Have each group suggest improvements for the area around the school.
- ✓ Vote: Which is the best idea presented to improve the school's neighborhood?
- ✓ Find out how much your improvement will cost the city by pricing the materials that are going to be installed. (Call the manufacturers of the equipment for a quote or call the city for an estimate.)
- Call City Hall and ask which office or board makes decisions in the area of your improvement. It might be the Library Department, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, etc.
- ✓ Have students write a letter (using proper letter format) to present the idea with a budget to the proper authorities.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ★ How would your community pay for the improvement you suggested?
- ★ Do you think the fact that you are students will help or hinder the implementation of your idea? Would you have a better chance of having your thoughts heard if you were of voting age? Why or why not?
- ★ What are other ways students can impact their communities?

### **MORE!**

Find out when your City Council or a public board meets. Encourage students and parents to attend such a meeting together. Ask those who attend to report about one proposal they observed at the meeting.

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