TEACHER
GUIDE

Building community takes all of us! By volunteering our time or talents with a volunteer organization, starting a new business to provide a needed service, asking the local government to take action to deal with an issue, or bringing attention to a problem in our community, it is through our actions that we can work to support one another.

This year's National Civics Bee asks you how you can make a difference in your community!

Identify a problem, challenge, or opportunity in your local community. What can you do to contribute to its improvement based on Founding principles and civic virtues?

Founding principles are an important starting point for solutions to problems. They provide us with a framework for understanding how we can best work together in a free community. We call them Founding principles because they are built into the ideas of the American Founding. These core ideas of the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution help guide us today. Examples include natural/inalienable rights, consent of the governed, rule of law, federalism, and private property.

Civic virtues go hand in hand with Founding principles. They are habits that help us ensure we are acting in the best interest of the community. They also help guide us because the more we practice civic virtue, the more we uphold individual freedom and the common good. Examples include: humility, integrity, moderation, respect, and responsibility. More information about Founding principles and civic virtues can be found here.

Is there something in your community that you would like to change? Or would you like to provide a service currently missing from your community? Or would you like to work to get more support from your community for an organization or group that you belong to?

Think about the communities you might belong to: schools, religious organizations, charitable groups, towns, states, or neighborhoods. All these groups require the work of individuals to support them so that they can do their essential work. By practicing civic virtue and using your talents, you can solve a problem you feel passionate about and create something that is beautiful and necessary in making our community better. Let us know how you can make a difference!

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Use the following questions to help write your response to the prompt:

Prompts	Supporting Questions
What way can you contribute to your community? How might others view this problem or opportunity differently?	**MyImpact Challenge: Identifying Your Problem** *Bill of Rights Institute* https://billofrightsinstitute.org/lessons/mic-identifying-your-problem
What are the ways you can approach this issue?	**Citizen Me** *iCivics* https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/citizen-me
What is your idea or recommendation?	**We the People: Project Citizen** *Center for Civic Education* https://www.civiced.org/lessons/we-the-people-project-citizen
What sources provide supporting evidence or examples for your idea or recommendation?	**We the Civics Kids** *National Constitution Center* https://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/we-the-civics-kids
How might members of your community or neighborhood bring your idea or recommendation to life?	
Who might oppose your idea? How might you respond?	

Students should include at least one of the following principles and one of the civic virtues in their response. We've created this graphic organizer to help think through which are best to include: Graphic Organizer

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I. FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

1. Natural/Inalienable Rights

- **Definition**—Rights which belong to humans by nature which cannot be taken away. Examples are life, liberty, and property.
- **Consider this**—Does your solution relate to injustices in your community? Are people being denied equality?
- **Examples**—A project that secures or recognizes the fundamental rights of others in your community. This could be a project that works toward achieving greater equality or the securing of someone's individual property.

2. Consent of the Governed

- **Definition**—The power of government comes from the people.
- **Consider this**—Will your solution need to get approval from your community?
- **Examples**—Consulting with a local chamber of commerce to get input from the business community, meeting with a local neighborhood group to get their support for your idea, organizing fellow students or voters to make sure your idea is heard.

3. Rule of Law

- **Definition**—Government and citizens all abide by the same laws regardless of political power. Those laws must be stable and justly applied.
- **Consider this**—Will your solution be fair and equally applied in the community? Are there government processes you will need to follow?
- **Examples**—Working with a local town council to change a city ordinance, working with a local parks department to change a policy, filing a formal petition, or following a formal government process.

4. Separation of Powers

- **Definition**—Each division of government exercises distinct powers to carry out its functions and to prevent the accumulation of power.
- **Consider this**—If you think the government can help you, which branch should you work with to make your contribution?
- **Examples**—Your idea will require action from your mayor or organization leader, your idea will require a new policy, regulation, or legislation passed by your town council or community body, your idea will require you to work with a law enforcement.

5. Federalism

- **Definition**—The national and state governments have a balance of separate and shared powers. The people delegate certain powers to the national government, while the states retain other powers; and the people retain all powers not delegated to the governing bodies.
- **Consider this**—If you are working with the government, which level is most appropriate? The National government? The state? Your town or city?
- **Examples**—Working with your State legislature to pass a law because your town does not have the authority, speaking to your local town officials about a city ordinance that impacts your community organization, working with a local court to increase awareness of a legal process.

6. Private Property

- **Definition**—The natural right of all individuals to create, obtain, and control their possessions, beliefs, faculties, and opinions as well as the fruits of their labor.

- **Consider this**—Will your solution require individuals to part with their property (like their money), or lend their property to the community (like by offering rental space)?

- **Examples**—People will pay you for a service you plan to provide. People will need to donate their money to support your cause. Business or business leaders will need to donate time, money, or space to support your initiative.

II. CIVIC VIRTUES

1. Humility

- **Definition**—A recognition that one's ignorance is far greater than one's knowledge. Putting others ahead of ourselves in thought, word, and deed.

- **Consider this**—Will you need to listen to community members to find a solution?

- **Examples**—Hold a listening session to hear from members of the community you are working with. Learn a skill or the history of the community that your solution will impact.

2. Integrity

- **Definition**—To tell the truth, expose untruths, and keep one's promises.

- **Consider this**—How will you make sure to follow through on the solution you commit to?

- **Examples**—Create a realistic schedule for completing your solution. Make a public statement or message that acts as a commitment for others to hold you accountable.

3. Moderation

- **Definition**—The avoidance of excess or extremes.

- **Consider this**—How can you ensure your goals are realistic and achievable?

- **Examples**—Starting with a small solution that addresses a single problem while leaving room for it to grow. Make a set of goals you think you can reach within three to six months.

4. Respect

- **Definition**—Regard for and defending the equal rights and inherent dignity of all human beings, including oneself.

- **Consider this**—How will your solution support individuals and work well with other people in the community?

- **Examples**—Telling the stories of your community members with your project. Highlight how your contribution is part of a longer history of contributions by others. Be grateful for the help others give you or the knowledge they share.

5. Responsibility

- **Definition**—Acting on good judgement about what is right or wrong even when it is not popular. Individuals must take care of themselves, their families, and their fellow community members.

- **Consider this**—Why do you think your solution is necessary? Why is it important that YOU are the one that works towards this solution?

- **Examples**—Make clear how you have benefited from your community and why you wish to give back. Highlight what inspired you to act and why.

Essays will be evaluated by a panel of judges based on how well the students:

- Demonstrate an understanding of civics.
- Acknowledge and address opposing points of view.
- Acknowledge and address at least one Founding Principle and one Civic Virtue.
- Use primary sources, like newspapers, data, historical documents, images, or other documents that relate to your idea.
- Clearly describe an idea that is innovative or new to them.

ESSAY WRITING GUIDANCE

- Educators can support their students during the essay writing process by guiding them through the following suggestions:

Ideal responses:

- Address the question asked in a thoughtful and meaningful manner.
- Use cited facts and arguments when appropriate to support their answers.
- Are expressed in cohesive sentences and are free of distracting spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors.
- Address diverse viewpoints in a respectful manner.
- Organize their answer in a manner that flows logically and reads clearly.

While you are writing:

- Stay focused and minimize distractions.
- Write however you feel most comfortable— using a pen and paper, or a computer.
- Let your topic guide your structure. Consider including an introductory paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.
- Stay on track: if you find yourself getting off the topic, go back and revise.
- Remember all writing is re-writing.

After you write, ask yourself:

Have I answered all aspects of the question?

- Is it clear what I am discussing?
- Have I stated an opinion when asked for one?
- Have I provided examples where asked?
- Have I said what I wanted to say?

Is my essay well-written?

- Have I used paragraphs?
- Do all my paragraphs have a topic sentence?
- Do I fully develop one idea per paragraph?

Is my writing correct?

- Have I checked for spelling errors myself, without relying on spell-check?
- Have I checked for grammar errors without relying on a grammar checker?
- Have I checked my facts: dates, document titles, names, etc.?

Other ideas:

- Try reading your essay aloud to a family member. Does it sound like it flows easily? Can your audience member summarize your essay back to you in one or two sentences? (If they can't, try going back and clarifying your ideas.)
- Try putting your essay down for a day or two and coming back to it and re-reading it. Do you notice anything you'd like to change or add?

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