



THE EXCHANGE



A MARKETPLACE OF STUDENT IDEAS



“Are the principles of
the U.S. Constitution
reflected in your school?”

Are the principles of the U.S. Constitution reflected in your school?

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

– Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

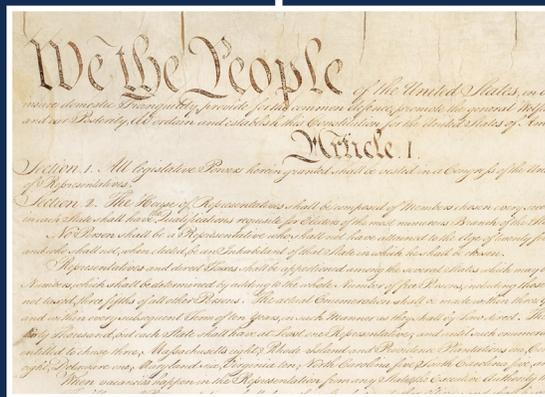
The U.S. Constitution is more than the blueprint for our system of government. It embodies a set of principles we live by and represents who we are as a people. The challenge the Framers of the Constitution faced was to create a government strong enough to insure peace and order, but not so strong that it threatened individual rights. To ensure this balance is maintained, the principles outlined in the Constitution, such as the separation of powers and a system of checks and balances, allow for the creation, enforcement, and review of laws.

In order to create a safe and successful learning environment for students, our school systems have constructed their own sets of rules and regulations. Those rules attempt to strike

the same balance the Framers did, between order and liberty. Considering that many schools draft their own constitutions

and create student councils and government systems, do these models include the constitutional principles that the Founders considered absolutely necessary in order to maintain a democracy? What governing models do administrators look to when drafting their school policies? What are some of the ways students are able to make their voices heard? How do the rights of students in a school system differ from our individual rights as U.S. citizens?

Are we able to see the principles of the Constitution in our school systems, and is there a need to incorporate more of these principles?



What do you think?

Examples of how we see the principles of the U.S. Constitution reflected in our school:

Ways our school can incorporate some of the principles of the U.S. Constitution:

INTRODUCTION

Grades:

Middle School
High School

Classroom Time:

45 minutes

Constitution Connections:

- Preamble; Articles I, III, and V; Amendments I, IV, V

Materials:

- Student Worksheet

NCSS Standards:

- II
Time, Continuity and Change
- V
Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI
Power, Authority and Governance
- X
Civic Ideals and Practices

National Standards for Civics and Government:

- NSS-C.9-12.2
Foundations of the Political System
- NSS-C.9-12.3
Principles of Democracy

National Standards for History:

- NSS-USH.5-12.3
Revolution and the New Nation
- NSS-USH.5-12.10
Contemporary United States

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About This Lesson

This research and deliberation activity encourages students to review principles of the U.S. Constitution and determine whether these principles are reflected in their schools. Through researching their own school policies and reviewing constitutional principles, students will better understand the functions of their school and any constitutional connections. Through deliberation, students can review why certain principles are found in the school system and why others are not, and if any principles need to be better incorporated. In any deliberation activity, compromise and listening will play a key role in finding common ground.

Objectives

Students will be able to compare and contrast specific aspects of their school system (including school policies and student government system) with the key principles found in the U.S. Constitution.

What is Deliberation?

The Framers of the Constitution envisioned deliberation among a diverse citizenry who disagreed on issues because they felt that, through compromise, Americans could find ways to promote the common good.

Deliberation is often confused with debate, but the two are different. **Debate** creates a dichotomy while **deliberation** allows for careful consideration of multiple points of view, so the best choice can be made. Essentially, debate is competitive, focusing on who is right and who is wrong, while deliberation allows for compromise and consensus.

Deliberation is focused around an issue, generally laws or policy, though it can also include public behavior and cultural practices. The Town Hall Wall deliberation method offers multiple points of view and then encourages a conversation about the pros and cons of each perspective in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Point of View and Call to Action

Your students will work to craft a personal **Point of View** statement based on the questions presented in the handouts. After developing a point of view, your students will rank their school and develop a **Plan of Action** to either secure the constitutional principles they find in their school and/or work to incorporate more of these principles in school policies and student government.

Teacher Resources

Links to the documents used in this lesson and extension readings for this lesson are available at the National Constitution Center's website at:
www.constitutioncenter.org/exchange

Searchable U.S. Constitution and annotated guide available at:
<http://ratify.constitutioncenter.org/constitution>

Landmark court cases available at:
<http://www.uscourts.gov/EducationalResources/ConstitutionResources/LegalLandmarks.aspx>

For in-depth review of the Framers' understanding of the principles of the Constitution, see the Federalist Papers available at:
<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

Student Government Tool Kit: LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

OPENING: TOWN HALL WALL

1. Distribute the **Town Hall Wall** handout to your students. Next, have them read the question and description on the poster. Ask for one or two examples of constitutional principles reflected in the school and one or two examples of principles students would like the school to incorporate. Explain to the students that the circles will be filled in later in the lesson.

Q: Are the principles of the U.S. Constitution reflected in your school?

RESEARCH AND ASSESS: Identify the Constitutional Principles in Your School

2. Distribute the **Student Worksheet**. Have students read the handout and list possible examples of the principles they find in their school. Be sure to review and incorporate your school policy book if available. Tell the students they will rank their school at the end of the lesson.

DELIBERATION: Evaluate if Change Is Necessary

3. Distribute the **Developing a Point of View** handout. Using the **Student Worksheet** as a reference, have your students answer the following questions.

1. Why would you want these principles in your school?

Consider positive outcomes the Framers envisioned when drafting the U.S. Constitution, such as a system of checks and balances and individual rights.

2. In your opinion, what are some negative outcomes of having these principles in your school?

Consider questions such as “Can students be trusted to govern?” and “Should schools be more democratic?”

3. Do you feel, as a student, that your voice is heard and represented in your school system?

Use the Student Worksheet for reference.

4. Are there policies in your school that violate your right to due process? Searches and seizures? Freedom of expression?

Refer to the Student Handbook or equivalent book of school policies for reference. Consider examples such as school dress code, right to assemble, and punishment for violating school policy.

5. Are there policies in your school that uphold your right to due process? Searches and seizures? Freedom of expression?

Refer to the Student Handbook or equivalent book of school policies for reference. Consider examples such as a student judicial review system, the role of student council, etc.

6. In your view, are the principles of the U.S. Constitution reflected in your school? Explain your answer.

Students should use evidence and examples that were previously listed to support their answers.

PLAN OF ACTION: Take the Next Steps

4. After your students have had time to answer the questions on the **Developing a Point of View** handout, have your students fill in the circles on their **Town Hall Wall** handout. There may be overlap for certain examples, such as a policy that reflects a constitutional principle but may also need revision in the student’s opinion.
5. Next, have your students rank their school for each constitutional principle on the **Student Worksheet**. Have your students share their rankings and come to a consensus for each principle as a group.
6. Consider the question: “Is change necessary?” For further assessment, have your students choose a Plan of Action if they find the school satisfies constitutional principles or if they feel more principles need to be incorporated:
 - Form a committee to review your student government’s role. Is the student voice considered when drafting school policies and curricula, or is your student government only responsible for planning and organizing important student events and extra-curricular activities?
 - Draft a new school constitution.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

Constitution Highlights: Some aspects of the Constitution you might see in your school...	The Principles and Questions to Consider...	Possible Examples in Your School...	Are these Principles Reflected? Rank Your School... 1 2 3 4 5 (agree to disagree)
Article I, Section 7 Every Bill...shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President...if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law.	<i>Checks and Balances / Separation of Power</i> How are the policies of your school decided? Who is involved in the process?		
Article III, Section 2 The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution...	<i>Independent Judiciary / Rule of Law</i> How does your school determine when rules are broken? Does the same person who makes the rules act as judge and juror?		
Article V The Congress...shall propose Amendments to this Constitution...	<i>Amendment Process</i> Who has a say in changing the policies of your school?		
Amendment I Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble...	<i>Individual Rights: Speech, Religion, Assembly, Free Press, Petition</i> Do school policies violate a student's right of expression?		
Amendment IV The right of the people...against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated...	<i>Searches and Seizures</i> What provides just cause for an administrator having the right to search and seize a student's property?		
Amendment V No person shall...be deprived life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...	<i>Due Process / Rule of Law</i> Is there a fair process to challenge a ruling or consequence for a student's behavior?		

TRY THIS: List other parts of the U.S. Constitution that are alive in your school...

DEVELOPING A POINT OF VIEW

1) Why would you want these principles in your school?

2) In your opinion, what are some negative outcomes of having these principles in your school?

3) Do you feel, as a student, that your voice is heard and represented in your school system?

4) Are there policies in your school that violate your right to due process? Searches and seizures? Freedom of expression?

5) Are there policies in your school that uphold your right to due process? Searches and seizures? Freedom of expression?

6) In your view, are the principles of the U.S. Constitution reflected in your school? Explain your answer.

WE THE PEOPLE

Our country faces enormous challenges both foreign and domestic. We need citizens who believe that democracy demands more than voting in November. A sustainable democracy needs citizens who believe in taking part in our nation's political, social and economic discourse. The responsibility for maintaining a democracy that protects the freedoms enshrined in our Constitution is in the hands of the people.

This is why Abraham Lincoln's words still ring true today:

“...government of the people, by the people, for the people...”

COMING SOON: WE THE SCHOOL

Constitution High's Blueprint for a Democratic School Government.

Imagine a school government that provides students with avenues to engage meaningfully in civic discourse. Using the United States Constitution as a blueprint, We the School offers a model of student government that gives students a stronger voice in school affairs and encourages democratic participation. This model allows faculty and students to address issues facing the community together, and enables students to practice the skills of democratic governance. We the School will give you the tools necessary to replicate this innovative form of student government in your own school. To learn more visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

BE HEARD

Now your students can experience an innovative way to deliberate current constitutional issues with other high school students across the nation that is free of charge.

The Exchange is a dynamic way for high school students to discover how their peers in their classroom and other parts of the country view important issues facing the nation. Past topics include: *Is the Constitution color-blind?; Should a clean and healthy environment be a constitutional right?; Should the U.S. reduce immigration?; Should the government make sure that every American has affordable health insurance?; Should same-sex couples have the right to marry?*

All you need to get involved is...

- Interest in deliberating current events in your classroom
- Interest in constitutional issues
- Internet connectivity

Join the nationwide conversation by...

- Downloading the free lesson plan and educational resources
- Viewing or participating in the live Internet webcast
- Taking our online nationwide poll

Join the conversation online at:

www.constitutioncenter.org/exchange

The screenshot shows the 'The Exchange' website interface. At the top, it says 'National Constitution Center - The Exchange'. Below that is a main heading 'Join the marketplace of student ideas.' followed by a brief description: 'The Exchange is a public forum in which high school students discover the power of their voices as citizens. It encourages students to apply constitutional values to the most pressing and often divisive issues of the day.' There is a navigation menu with 'About', 'Educational Resources', and 'Participate'. A 'Get Involved Now' section is prominent, featuring a video player for a webcast titled 'Should a year of national service be required for all Americans?' and a 'GO TO THE CALL TO ACTION PAGE' button. Below the video, there are sections for 'Watch Videos' (with a video titled 'Past Topics from The Exchange') and 'Web Poll' (with a poll question 'Can government prohibit citizens from wearing headgear?'). The footer includes copyright information for 2008-2010 and logos for partner organizations like National Constitution Center, National Endowment for the Humanities, and Scholastic.