

## Doing Democracy: Being an Active Citizen/Community Member

### Overview

According to Patricia Hill Collins (2009), many of us “see democracy as a thing, a finished product,” when in actuality “democracy is a *process*, a way of building community and getting business done.” In this activity, students will focus on the active components of democracy seldom highlighted through discussion and role plays. Students will ultimately understand that they each are responsible for “doing” democracy through their active participation as citizens and community members. This activity can be conducted as part of a visit to the public library, during which students also explore the library as a space for strengthening democratic ideals, or in the classroom.

### Grades

6-12

### Essential Questions

- What is democracy and in what ways is democracy a “process” that we must all participate in?
- What are the various ways young activists can advocate for change?
- What role does a public library serve in a democratic society?

### Materials

- Quote Strips, attached (these should be cut apart prior to implementation)
- Role Plays (7 scenarios are attached)
- OPTIONAL: If conducting this activity as part of a public library field trip, teachers may want to read the article [Libraries & Civic Engagement](#) by Nancy Kranich to explore the connections between public libraries and active democracy.

### Duration

45 minutes (varies pending the amount of discussion)

### Procedure

#### What is Democracy?

1. Write the word “DEMOCRACY” on the board and ask students to brainstorm what comes to mind. (Note all thoughts on a piece of chart paper up front.) As students share their thoughts, remind them that there is no right or wrong answer and encourage their continued thinking with follow-up questions when necessary. For example:
  - What images come to mind when considering this word?
  - What does democracy look like? Sound like? Feel like?
  - What actions do you relate to democracy?
  - Who is included in or constitutes democracy?
  - Who is responsible for democracy? What does it take to make a democracy successful?

**Alternative:** As a visual alternative, provide students with various printed publications (i.e., magazines, periodicals, brochures, etc.) and have them begin by finding an image (abstract or literal) that they feel

represents democracy. Students can cut out their choice and tape it to a large piece of paper at the front of the room. This will form a class collage that can then serve as the basis of discussion.

### **Beyond the Common Definition: Democracy as Something We “Do”**

2. To further the discussion, project or handout the following quote from Patricia Hill Collins (2009) and ask students to silently read and ponder it:

“[We] see democracy as a thing, a finished product...Yet in reality, democracy is a *process*, a way of building community and getting business done – it is typically something that is not bestowed upon us by people at the top, but rather something that bubbles up from below. Strong democratic societies meld the different talents, experiences, and skills of their citizenry to build effective neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and communities – this is, strong public institutions grounded in local participation.”

Discuss:

- What words, phrases or concepts from this quote strike you and why?
  - What message is Patricia Hill Collins trying to convey? According to her, what mistake are we making in how we think about democracy?
  - What do you think she means when she says that “democracy is a *process*?” Do you agree or disagree and why?
  - What does she mean when she says that democracy “bubbles up from below?” Can you think of examples that illustrate this?
  - In Collins’s mind, what constitutes a strong democracy? Do you agree or disagree and why? Based on her characterization, would you evaluate America’s democracy as strong or weak and why?
  - How does this view, that democracy is something that we must “do” and participate in, differ from how we typically speak about or think about democracy? How does it relate to our own brainstormed list (or collage)?
3. Briefly review the common aspects of democracy. Explain to students that democracy is often solely defined in terms of political government, be it direct democracy (carried out by the people), or republicanism (elected representatives are given the power to govern by the people, for the people.) Common principles associated with the definition of democracy are equality (equal protection before the law), freedom, and liberty (rights), typically protected by a constitution. However, the mistake we often make is in viewing democracy as a “thing” (be it a government, one particular action like voting, etc.) or something that others (elected and appointed officials) are responsible for, rather than something we each are responsible for doing and participating in. In actuality, we each have a stake and role to play in a democracy. Discuss:
    - If we consider democracy as requiring action from each of us, rather than a thing totally separate from us, what are some ways that we can “do” democracy (i.e., affect public policy and/or change, whether in school, their community, state, federal, etc.)?
      - Ensure students consider as many options as possible, such as: marches, protests, town halls, school walk outs, attending scheduled governmental meetings (i.e., school board, city council, county commissioners, etc.), meeting with legislators, lobbying, speaking to the press, writing a blog or op ed, voting, canvassing, boycotting, organizing an event, educating self and others, etc.
    - Do young people have the power to “do” democracy and make a difference? Explain.
    - What are some of the challenges youth face when trying to advocate for change? Alternatively, are there some ways in which youth are better positioned to bring about change than adults are? Explain.
    - What spaces in your community would you consider places to “do” democracy?

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*This lesson plan was created by [Carolina K-12](#) and the [Chapel Hill Public Library](#) as part of the “Doing Democracy: Civic Engagement & Education at the Public Library” project, made possible by funding from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (IMLS grant number LS-00-17-0034-17).*

- Sample answers might include everything from town hall, community centers, schools, etc. Ideally, a student will identify the public library to transition into the conversation below. If not, prompt students with the questions following.
- What about the public library – what role does it serve in a democratic society? Why is a public library an important part of an engaged community?
- In what ways can library’s encourage responsible citizenship and active, engaged community members? In what specific ways can a library offer a public space for doing democracy? How can the library be a cultural, political, and/or social hub for a community to come together to have important conversations and work on problems?

### **The Public Library as a Space for Doing Democracy**

4. If conducting this activity as part of a visit to the public library, discuss with students the role of libraries to “uphold and strengthen some of the most fundamental democratic ideals of our society; they not only make information freely available to all, but also foster the development of a civil society.” (Nancy Kranich) Ask students to comment on particular examples of how libraries do this, or could do a better job of this. (As an optional teacher reading to explore the concept of libraries and democratic society, see the article [Libraries & Civic Engagement](#) by Nancy Kranich.)
5. Allow students to briefly explore this concept further in small groups. Provide each group one of the attached quotes that connect libraries to active democracy and/or community building. Groups should use the questions provided to discuss the quote and be prepared to briefly summarize their discussion with the remainder of the group in 4-5 minutes.

### **Democracy in Action Role Plays**

6. Next, tell students that they are going to explore some of the specific ways they might “do” democracy. Distribute the attached role plays to students and explain that in each scene, the students portrayed are grappling with how and whether to “do” democracy. Each group should take 5 minutes to stage and practice their scene in order to perform it for the remainder of the class. After each performance, the class will discuss what they viewed. (If groups have more students than the scene has roles, students can add in additional characters to the scene or students can take on roles such as a “Director.”)
7. Once all students are ready to perform, go over respectful audience member expectations by asking students:
  - How can we show the performers that we are respecting and listening to them? (Facilitate answers such as: listen; don’t work on our own scene or talk while watching; look at the performers; clap loudly when they are finished; don’t tease or make fun of anyone; etc.)
  - Why is being a respectful audience member and classmate important? (Point out to students that the ways in which they treat one another and communicate with one another is also a part of democracy!)
8. Use the questions listed below to guide student discussion after each performance:
  - **Phone Call to a Senator**
    - Why was the student phoning Senator Smith?
    - Did the student do an effective job on this phone call? Why not?
    - What specific mistakes did he/she make? (Looking for answers such as: watching TV; noise in background; not focused; unorganized; didn’t have a script or something to say prepared; wasn’t specific regarding his/her cause or what he/she wanted from the Senator; didn’t seem serious; was rude/immature, etc.)

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- What could be improved? If he/she were to call another Senator in the future, what should he/she do differently?
  - What difference can phoning, e-mailing or writing a letter to your local, state, or federal representatives make, when doing it the proper way? If you want to phone or write your representatives, how can you find out who they are and how to contact them? (Explain to students that they can go to [www.ncga.state.nc.us](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us) to find out this information.)
- **Meeting With a Representative**
    - Evaluate the meeting with Representative Gonzalez. Do you think he/she was moved by the students' concerns for global warming? Why not?
    - How did the students do working together to inform Gonzalez of their feelings?
    - What did you notice about how the characters were dressed (based on their conversation in the beginning of the scene)? What is an appropriate way to dress and present yourself when visiting your legislators? (It is recommended students dress business casual, unless they are with a group wearing t-shirts advertising their group's name or cause; also discuss with students how to deliver a professional handshake and the importance of that first impression.)
    - If you prepare for a meeting, what difference can lobbying your law makers in person make?
- **Voting**
    - What happened in this scene? What was the difference in opinion the two students had?
    - Was this realistic? Do you think some people really feel like their vote won't matter? Why do you think people feel this way?
    - Can one vote make a difference? Explain.
    - Why is it important that every citizen register to vote, educate themselves regarding candidates and issues, and participate in elections, both local, state and federal?
    - Even if you are not old enough to vote or unable to vote by law, how can you still participate in the election process? (volunteer for a candidate of your choice, register voters, encourage others to vote, etc.)
- **Participating in a March/Rally**
    - What is the purpose of a march or rally? What is your opinion of marches/rally's? Are they an effective way to advocate for change? Why or why not?
    - What are some recent marches/rallies that have taken place and what was their purpose? In hindsight, were they effective in any way (i.e., calling attention to an issue, influencing votes, creating a community, etc.?) Explain.
    - The student who chose not to attend the march noted that he/she had liked a FaceBook page for the march. Is that enough? Why or why not? Does participation on FaceBook (i.e., liking a page, engaging in a conversation or debate, etc.) make a difference? Explain.
    - What other types of advocacy might be combined with a march, rally, protest, etc. to further the impact?
- **Speaking to the Press/Media**
    - Did the students do an effective job speaking to the media? Explain.
    - In what ways can you use an opportunity like this (i.e. an interview with the news) to advocate for your cause?
    - What role do various media organizations have in influencing public policy?
    - What recommendations would you make to these students if they were going to be interviewed again? (Discuss issues such as being prepared; dressing appropriately; having clear and concise

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points and arguments; speaking maturely and clearly; looking confidently at the interviewer or into the camera; etc.)

- Once you are prepared to advocate properly to the media/press, why is it a good idea to make them aware of any events you plan?
- ✓ Discuss with students another aspect of activism and democracy also involving the media, which is viewing media elements (i.e., TV, movies, advertisements, promotional material, etc.) critically. Remind students that just because something is in the paper or on the news, it doesn't necessarily mean the information is accurate. For resources on media literacy, see <http://www.medialit.org/>.)

- **Issue Campaign**

- How many of you love complaining about things, whether it's a messy school or a decision an adult has made? Why is complaining about something completely ineffective unless you make your thoughts known in an official capacity?
- How many of you have had similar feelings to the character in the role play who said adults don't listen? What makes you feel like adults don't listen? What are some ways that you can get adults to listen?
- Let's assume these students decided to tackle this issue. What responsible steps would you recommend they take to ensure they are taken seriously and heard?
- While organizing a group of like-minded people might take work and commitment, why is this an effective way to bring about change?
- What other examples can you note of ways groups can together make a difference? (Discuss examples of how there is power in numbers - i.e., boycotting, protesting, community organizing, etc.)

- **Speaking at a County Commissioners Meeting**

- Why is it important to be aware of decisions being considered and made by your local government officials (i.e., county commissioners and city council?)
- In what ways does local government impact each of us?
- Despite the fact that local government impacts everyone in numerous ways – from the quality of our water to the local laws we abide by – the rates of voter turnout in local elections are incredibly low. Why do you think this is the case?
- If these students move forward with signing up to speak at the meeting, what do you think would make the components of a successful and convincing presentation?

➤ **Optional:** To explore additional ways to “do” democracy, teachers can consult the article [25 Ways to Be Politically Active \(whether you lean left or right\)](#)

**OPTIONAL Extension Activities: Always Be Prepared or “Democracy is...” Posters**

6. **Always Be Prepared:** Explain to students that if they have a particular issue that they are interested in advocating for, it is a good idea to be ready to clearly explain and discuss their feelings on that issue at any given moment. Opportunities often arise unexpectedly, so it is important to always be prepared. One way to do this is by creating an “elevator speech,” so called because it is a quick explanation that can be given in a few minutes (the time it would take to ride an elevator).

Instruct students to work individually or in partners to create an elevator speech that addresses a cause they care about. While it is called a “speech,” it is really a description of an issue that you are interested in that can be delivered over the phone, at a meeting, to the press, etc. Having an elevator speech will result

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in your always being prepared to speak efficiently on the topic you are concerned about. Give student the following parameters for their “elevator speech:”

- Introduce yourself (name, school, age/grade)
- Clearly state your purpose (What issue concerns you? What cause are you advocating for and why?)
- Explain the issue, its negative impact, and specific ways those in charge (school board, city council, legislators, business owner, etc.) should take action to alleviate the negative impact.
- Be mature and persuasive; note how this issue is relevant and why it is thus important to take your recommended action.
- Note the negative consequences that may arise if those in charge do not take your recommended action.
- Note why you care about this issue and why you are trying to promote this agenda (personalize it).
- Deliver your speech in an effective way:
  - Clear pronunciation and appropriate volume
  - Energetic and varied tone
  - Eye contact, appropriate facial expressions, appropriate movement

Once students have prepared their speeches, allow them to present to the class and critique one another. Students can offer positive feedback to one another regarding what they liked and make suggestions on ways to improve each speech. Teachers can assign particular circumstances for students to present their speech within (i.e., you are at a banquet and you notice that your state representative is a guest - pretend to walk up to him/her at the reception and share your concerns. Or, you receive a phone call from the local paper who wants to hear your opinion on an issue that is important to you..., etc.)

7. **“Democracy is...”**: As an extension activity, have students group up and provide each group with a piece of poster board or chart paper and instruct them to create a visual representation of the prompt: “Democracy is...” Teachers might want to tell students to imagine that their final products will be used in a exhibition on democracy at the local public library. Give students guidelines for their final product; for example, posters should:
- be a response to the prompt of “Democracy is...”
  - contain literal or abstract images, drawings, symbols, and/or colors
  - contain a phrase, slogan, or text that helps viewers interpret the poster’s topic/message
  - be original, creative, and well thought out
  - include contributed thoughts and designs from each group member

Encourage students to brainstorm various ideas before beginning their design. Posters can be finished in class or due on a future date, depending on the teacher’s time constraints. Once students are ready to turn their posters in, hang them around the room or in another location (such as the hall, media center, etc.) and allow students to do a gallery walk to view one another’s work. Teachers can number each poster and have students write down feedback in chart form as they rotate around the room. For example:

Poster #	My interpretation of the poster’s message	What I liked about or learned from the poster	Questions I have

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Culminate with a discussion:

- Which poster struck you most and why?
- Which poster do you feel best completes the prompt of “Democracy is...” and why?
- If someone who knew nothing about democracy viewed this gallery, what do you think their first impression of democracy would be and why? What would they learn and why? What would they perhaps not understand that they would need to know?

### Culminating Discussion

8. End the activity by sharing the quote below regarding youth in democracy by [Danielle Allen](#), utilizing it as a basis for a culminating discussion. (Teachers can either read the quote, or play it using [this link](#).)
- “...the truth of the matter is that the actual diagnosis of what's wrong in the world around us starts with us, and it starts with young people. If there's any message I could drive home most forcefully today it would be namely this: that young people really see the shape of our world presently. I think they have a better understanding of it than any other generation. But we are not letting young people set the agenda for the issues we pay attention to. I think hearing young peoples' diagnoses, activating them as diagnosers, is the first and most important thing to do. And then, yes, policy experts can come in and help think about the specific diagnoses that have been put on the table and listen to ideas about solutions and work with young people, and work with other people, about those solutions and bring their expertise to bear. But that diagnosis is most powerful when it is a truly democratic process, really bubbling up, and when the voices of youth are heard.” (Source: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/audio/danielle-allen-youth-democracy>)
  - Discuss:
    - What is Allen’s message regarding young people and political change? What examples can you identify in current events that exemplify her points?
    - Do you agree that people your age have a better understanding of our present world than any other generation? Why or why not?
    - She notes that society is not letting young people “set the agenda.” Why do you think this is the case? Do you agree youth should be the ones to “set the agenda?” Why or why not? If yes, how can the exclusion of youth by decision makers be changed? (Or, do you see any examples of this already changing? (i.e., student led protests after the high school shooting in Parkland, FL in Feb., 2018)
    - Considering everything we have discussed, what have you learned about democracy that you did not know before? Or, how have your views on democracy changed? Explain.

## Quote Strips

Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities. *R. David Lankes*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
  - What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
  - Do you agree with the quote's message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?
- 

The truth is libraries are raucous clubhouses for free speech, controversy, and community. *Paula Poundstone*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
  - What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
  - Do you agree with the quote's message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?
- 

Perhaps no place in any community is so totally democratic as the town library. The only entrance requirement is interest. *Lady Bird Johnson*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
- What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
- Do you agree with the quote's message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?

Libraries level the playing field as great democratic institutions, serving people of every age, income level, location, ethnicity, or physical ability, and providing the full range of information resources needed to live, learn, govern, and work. [They] are places for community engagement, a platform for great minds to come together. *American Library Association*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
  - What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
  - Do you agree with the quote’s message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?
- 

Libraries sustain democracy. Libraries provide access to information and multiple points of view so that people can make knowledgeable decisions on public policy throughout their lives. With their collections, programs, and professional expertise, librarians help their patrons identify accurate and authoritative data and use information resources wisely to stay informed. The public library is the only institution in American society whose purpose is to guard against the tyrannies of ignorance and conformity. *Leonard Kniffel*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
- What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
- Do you agree with the quote’s message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?

Libraries uphold and strengthen some of the most fundamental democratic ideals of our society; they not only make information freely available to all, but also foster the development of a civil society. They also provide comfortable, inviting, neutral, safe civic spaces conducive to democratic discourse – spaces where citizens can work together to solve public problems. *Nancy Kranich*

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
- What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
- Do you agree with the quote’s message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?

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“The library card is a passport to wonders and miracles, glimpses into other lives, religions, experiences, the hopes and dreams and strivings of ALL human beings, and it is this passport that opens our eyes and hearts to the world beyond our front doors, that is one of our best hopes against tyranny, xenophobia, hopelessness, despair, anarchy, and ignorance.” (Libba Bray)

- What message is this quote conveying regarding the role of a library?
- What services do you think the author of this quote would argue that a library provides?
- Do you agree with the quote’s message regarding libraries and its role in a community? Why or why not?

## Student Role Plays

### Phone Call to a Senator

**Roles (2):** 1 Student, 1 Secretary

**Overview:** This scene illustrates mistakes made by a person who phones his/her Senator to advocate for children's health care.

*(When the scene starts, the student should be sitting in his or her living room, watching TV while placing the call. Senator Smith's secretary should be sitting at a desk when answering the call.)*

Student: *(picks up a phone and dials a number while smacking chewing gum and flipping through channels on the TV)* Man, nothing good is on MTV today!

Secretary: *(picking up the phone)* Good afternoon, Senator Smith's office.

Student: *(smacking gum)* Uh, yeah, hey. I wanna' talk to Senator Smith. *(drops remote control)* Dang it!

Secretary: Excuse me?

Student: Oh, sorry. I just dropped the remote control to the TV.

Secretary: EXCUSE ME?

Student: Whatever... can I just speak to Senator Smith or what?

Secretary: I'm afraid Senator Smith is out of the office right now. Can I help you with something?

Student: Uh, NO. I want to speak to Senator Smith. I am real ticked about this whole children's health care thing.

Secretary: Alright, would you like to leave a message?

Student: Oh, oh! Hold on! This is my SONG! *(starts focusing on the TV and singing along with a music video)*

Secretary: HELLO? Is this a prank call?

Student: No this ain't a prank call! I want Senator Smith to do something about this health care for children stuff. Don't you care about sick kids? Put the Senator on the phone.

Secretary: As I said, the Senator is out of the office. I'm happy to take a message.

Student: Ok, fine. You tell the Senator that \_\_\_\_\_ *(insert your name)* called, and I expect a call back to talk about this kid's health thing. OK?

Secretary: Sure. Ok. I'll give the Senator the message.

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### Meeting with a Legislator

**Roles (3):** 2 students, 1 legislator

**Overview:** Two students wait outside their Representative's office for a meeting, poorly dressed. Once the meeting begins it becomes evident they are inadequately prepared.

*(Students sit in chairs, waiting for their meeting with Representative Gonzalez.)*

Student A: Do you like my ripped jeans?

Student B: Yeah, those are cool. They look good with your tennis shoes. I wish I hadn't worn these flip-flops – it's chilly in here.

Student A: Yeah, but they match your tank top. What band is that on the front?

*(Representative Gonzalez enters and the students turn their attention to him/her)*

Gonzalez: Hello. I'm Representative Gonzalez. I understand you have some issues of concern you would like to talk about. *(Gonzalez reaches to shake hands with the students. Instead, the students slap the representative's hand in "high-5" style.)*

Student A: Your office is really small. What's up with that?

Student B: Yeah, do you like working here?

Gonzalez: I do like working here. I feel very lucky to serve the great state of North Carolina. Did you two have something you wanted to talk about?

Student A: Yeah we did. *(Hits Student B on the shoulder)* Go ahead. Tell him/her.

Student B: *(Hits Student A back on shoulder)* We said you would talk first. You say it.

Student A: UGH! You make me so mad sometimes! *(Turns back to Representative Gonzalez)* Ok, so we are here because we are really upset about global warming.

Gonzalez: I can understand that. What exactly are you upset about?

Student A: Um, well, you know. It's just really bad. There is like, A LOT of carbon and stuff. The polar bears are dying.

Student B: Yeah, all those poor polar bears!

Gonzalez: So you want me to save the polar bears? There aren't any polar bears in North Carolina.

Student A: Oh yeah. Well, we just want you to vote for that bill.

Gonzalez: Which bill?

Student B: You know, that environmental bill.

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Gonzalez: There are many environmental bills. Which one are you referring to?

Student A: Oh, we don't know. We just want you to fight global warming. The General Assembly really needs to care about the environment. It's important.

Gonzalez: Could you explain exactly why you feel it's important?

Student B: It just is!

Gonzalez: Well, thank you for coming. I've got to run to a meeting now.

## Voting

**Roles (2):** 2 students

**Overview:** Students discuss voting, one arguing that voting doesn't matter.

- Student A: I am so upset about the fact that these politicians don't seem to care about how much money our schools get. Have you noticed our text books are 10 years old?
- Student B: You're right, but hey, it's Election Day! I'm going to vote. Do you want to come?
- Student A: Man, no way. I'm going to play basketball. I don't have any time for that.
- Student B: Are you sure? If you don't vote, you don't have a say in the decisions the government makes for us or our school.
- Student A: Why should I care?
- Student B: The two candidates running for Governor have really different ideas for educational policies. One of the candidates is really interested in trying to improve funding for education and has promised to increase teacher pay. And we have two county commissioners up for election. One had committed to increasing the local supplement for our schools.
- Student A: So what? They're all liars anyway.
- Student B: That's exactly why you need to participate and vote. That's the only way to be sure we don't elect a liar, or someone who won't fight for education.
- Student A: Whatever. One vote won't make a difference. Besides, I don't care anything about any of it. I just want them to fix our broken down school. That's their job. They shouldn't need me to tell them that.

### Participating in a March/Rally

**Roles (3):** 3 people at a mall

- Student A: I think we are almost set for Saturday's March for Our Lives. I still need to make a few posters, though.
- Student B: I just reminded my mom that she needs to drive. We can fit 5 in our car. How many people does your granddad's van hold?
- Student C: We can take 6. We should probably have some talking points, too, in case we get lucky enough to get an interview.
- Student D: I really don't understand you guys. Why are you wasting a whole Saturday driving all the way to Washington just to freeze all day out there with all those strangers? You know it's not going to make a difference, right?
- Student A: How can you say that?
- Student C: Seriously? Of course it will make a difference.
- Student D: Nothing ever changes. And no law maker is going to look at a bunch of kids holding signs as a reason to change the way she votes.
- Student B: That's not true. There is power in numbers. If everyone thought like you, you're right, nothing would change. But by showing up, we are sending a message that this is something we care about.
- Student D: They don't care – we aren't even old enough to vote.
- Student A: Some of us are. And we all eventually turn 18. And when we do vote, if they don't listen, they need to know we'll be voting them out of office.
- Student C: Exactly. This is another way to let our voices be heard. And think about the attention this will get when thousands and thousands of people show up.
- Student D: Well, I liked the FaceBook page. But Saturday, I'm staying inside where it's warm. You guys have fun.

### Speak to the Press/Media

**Roles (3):** 1 reporter, 2 students

**Overview:** A TV reporter stands in front of the General Assembly and attempts to interview students.

Reporter: I'm standing outside of the General Assembly here live in Raleigh, where many students have gathered to speak with North Carolina's legislators about the importance of making state colleges more affordable (*several students come up behind the reporter and start waving to the camera as they try to get onto TV*) I'm going to see if we can speak with one of the students here today to tell us why this is such an important issue to them. (*Reporter turns to the waving students to interview them*) Excuse me, could I ask you a few questions?

Student A: Who us? Oh definitely!

Student B: We love to be on TV! (*both students run up beside the reporter and continue to wave into the camera*)

Student A: Hi mom! Hi dad!

Student B: Oh, can I say hi to my best friend? Hey Jasmine!

Reporter: OK, let's get to the point of why you are here. Could you tell the people at home why you are at the General Assembly today?

Student A: Oh, right. We are here...

Student B: (*cuts Student A off and steps in front*) We are here because we care about college and the frat parties and...

Student A: (*to Student B*) Ummmm, excuse? You just cut me off.

Student B: What? I'm answering the reporter's question.

Student A: Um, NO...I was answering the reporter's question. YOU are trying to be a camera hog.

Student B: I am not!

Student A: You are too!

Reporter: Can one of you just tell the THOUSANDS of people watching why you are here at the General Assembly today? What do you hope to accomplish?

Student B: Thousands? (*looks scared*)

Student A: Did you say thousands? (*also looks scared and starts to stutter*) Um, um...we are here...we are here because...Um...(nudges friend)...You tell them.

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Student B: I don't know what to say! Uh, it's important to go to college...and dress right while you are there. And it's important to get to go to college for cheap. Uh, because my folks don't have the money...

Reporter: Ok, that about does it. We're going to wrap up here. Thank you for tuning in viewers. And as to what is happening here at the General Assembly today, well...hopefully we'll have more on that at eleven.

## Organize an Issue Campaign

**Roles (3):** 3 students are in the school bathroom

**Overview:** 2 students complain about the unsanitary conditions in the school restroom; another student tries to convince them to take action on the issue

Student A: Our bathrooms are disgusting and I am sick of it!

Student B: Tell me about it. I don't even want to walk in here. Ugh!

Student A: Look at this. Someone has written all over the mirror in lipstick and the trash can is overflowing.

Student B: Gross. I can't believe people at this school are such pigs.

Student C: Rather than complaining about it, why don't you guys try to actually improve the situation?

Student B: What are you talking about? We shouldn't have to do anything. We aren't the ones trashing the place.

Student C: Right, but it's a public space that we all use, so that means if you want it improved, you might actually have to do something about it besides complain. It wouldn't take that much time for us to make some posters encouraging people to be tidier in here, since it's a space we all use. And, we could write up something to be put on the morning announcements or to be read at the next assembly. I bet if we tried, we could get more people on board.

Student A: Yeah, right. Like anyone is going to listen to us at this school.

Student C: Sure they would. We could even write a letter to the principal and tell her we want extra security to keep the bathrooms from getting so trashed that they are unusable. We deserve better than this.

Student A: I don't know – I'm already pretty busy.

Student C: You can't complain if you don't actually try to do something about the problem. Think about it.

## Speaking at a County Commissioner Meeting

**Roles:** 3 students

**Overview:** Students discuss the proposed closing of their local library and debate whether to attend a county commissioners meeting to advocate for it to stay open

Student A: Did you hear they are closing the county library? I'm so upset. I wish there was something we could do.

Student B: Yeah, I study there all the time! The county commissioners are saying that since there are 2 cities in the county with libraries, people can just use those. The closest one is 50 minutes from here and I don't have a driver's license.

Student A: Yeah, my uncle has been taking classes on writing a resume and interviewing at the county library. He lost his job last month and it's really been helping him. But he's worried that he can't afford the gas to drive almost an hour a way to use the library's computers and apply for jobs.

Student C: You know, the decision isn't final yet. The County Commissioners are holding a public comment session about it at their next meeting. You guys should sign up to speak and tell them what you think.

Student B: There is no way the county commissioners are going to listen to a couple of teenagers.

Student C: Well, that's the whole purpose of the comment session. If people don't show up and tell them why the library is important to them, of course they'll close it. They might not know how people are using it. They are just focused on saving money, I'm sure.

Student A: I don't know. The idea of speaking in front of all those people makes me nervous.

Student B: Me too. But you know, I think we should do it. This is our chance to actually speak to the local government officials making this decision. If we don't try, we'll never know if we could have made a difference.

Student C: And you should try to find other people who don't want to see our branch closed either. The more people they hear from who use the library, the harder it is for them to justify taking that service away from the community.