

County Solutions Step Three: Who You Gonna Call?

Time Needed: One class period

Materials Needed:

Student worksheets, overhead transparencies, or computer projector

Copy Instructions:

Reading page (*double-sided; class set*)

Cloze notes (*class set*)

Review worksheet (*double-sided; class set*)

Overhead transparencies (2)



This is lesson three of nine in a series that culminates in a final class project. All steps can be found at www.icivics.org/curriculum/countysolutions

Lesson Objectives. The students will:

- Compare the roles and effectiveness of three types of actors (individuals, groups, and the government).
- Suggest solutions for hypothetical community problems.
- Generate a list of actions the three types of actors could take to help address the class problem or issue.

STEP BY STEP

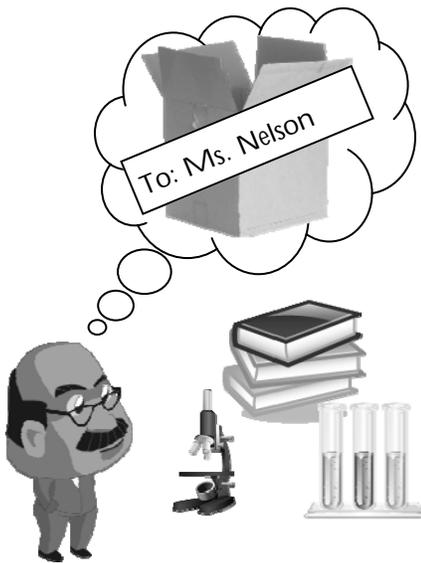
- DISPLAY** the County Solutions flow chart from the *Project Overview* and explain that this is one way to look at community problems and find solutions. Review the steps the class has taken so far. (Stop at 'Who should act?')
- DISTRIBUTE** the student worksheets and graphic organizer.
- READ** the first paragraph about Ms. Nelson's problem and have the students give a quick solution in the box before reading how different groups could provide solutions.
- EXPLAIN** to the students that every problem is unique and can benefit from any number of possible solutions.
- WALK THROUGH** the 'Which Action Is the Most Effective' with the class. Discuss the aspects of each type of action and allow the students to make their own judgments.
- POLL** the class to see which solution they thought was the best.
- PROJECT** the *Cloze Notes* transparency and read through the notes with the class, filling in the blanks and asking the student to follow along.
- ASK** students to complete the Speed and Scope section on the first activity page and discuss their responses.
- READ** through the problem-based scenarios on *Activity p. 1* as a class.
- ASSIGN** the rest of the activity by having the students read through the remaining scenarios and select the group they would have address the problem and discuss their options. (Some answers are straight forward, while others are up for debate.)
- CLOSE** the lesson by reviewing your class problem. Have the students use the bottom of the last activity page to think of one solution possibility for each group. Use the Brainstorm transparency to collect their ideas. (Save for later steps!)

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name: _____

Here's the Problem

Ms. Nelson's science classes have been using old textbooks, broken lab supplies, and cannot do any experiments because the school cannot afford the materials. The students are tested on the information in the outdated books (that are older than the students are!) *and* tested on the skills they should be practicing in the lab. Ms. Nelson tries to get new books and supplies every year, but there isn't enough money in the school budget to pay for them. What can be done to solve this problem?

My solution:



Individual Action

One possible solution involves a local business owner. He has heard about the lack of science lab supplies and just happens to own a store that sells these products. After getting a better idea of what specific things Ms. Nelson needs, he donates money for new books and delivers all the materials the classes need for the school year.

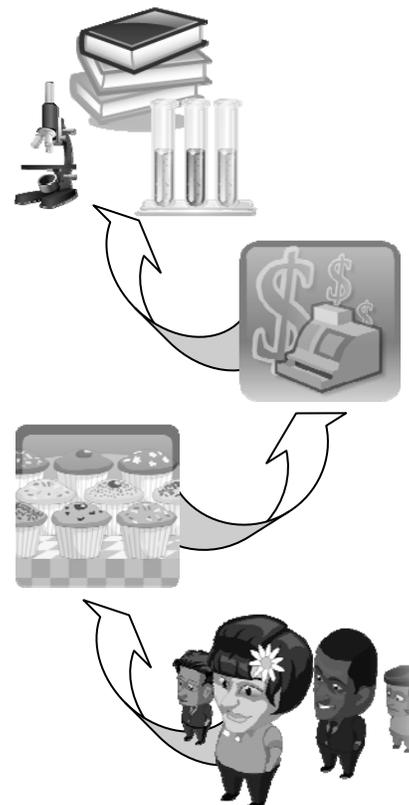
This donation makes a huge difference for Ms. Nelson and her students. However, the business owner can only afford to help out this year. That means the books will have to last a long time, and the materials will likely only last for one school year. The business owner cannot solve the larger problem of the school not having enough money to fund the science class year after year.

Group Action

Another solution includes a group of students and their parents. Worried about the quality of education, they meet to discuss how they could address the problem. The parents help organize bake sales and car washes throughout the year so the students can raise money to buy books and supplies. These actions are successful enough that the group opens a bank account that could be used in the future.

The parents also attend school board meetings and ask the board to increase funding for the science department. They convince the board that more funding is needed, but the board can't take action because the school doesn't have enough money. Future groups of students and parents will need to keep up the planning and fundraising efforts.

The money the students and parents raise improves the quality of Ms. Nelson's science classes. However, students and parents change from year to year. Ms. Nelson cannot depend on successful fundraising each school year. Even though the group could not convince the school board to spend more money on the science department, they were able to get the conversation started.



Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name: _____

Government Action

Ms. Nelson's classes were able to get a boost from a supportive business owner and a motivated group of students and parents. These solutions worked for the short term but would not provide dependable funding for the future. In order to give the science classes a permanent increase in funding, the school board would need to get involved. The school board is the local body of government in charge of the school.

If there was enough money in the school's budget, the school board could vote to increase funding for the science classes. Because there isn't enough money, the school board decides to ask local voters to raise property taxes in order to support the school. A proposal for the new law, called a *referendum*, is added to the ballot for the next election.



Before the election, the school board and supporters of this referendum work to educate the community about why the tax increase is needed. They explain the school's budget problems and how the new money will be used. The election is held, and the referendum passes!

Afterward, it takes almost a full school year to get the funding. But now the increase in the school's budget makes a big impact each year. Ms. Nelson is able to teach her science classes with up-to-date textbooks and working lab equipment, resulting in better grades and more enjoyable classes.

Which Action is the Most Effective?

Each type of action created a different solution to Ms. Nelson's problem. It's important to remember that there isn't one magic solution to any problem. Each approach has its pros and cons. Use the story of Ms. Nelson to answer the questions below.

The Business Owner

1. The business owner was able to see there was a need and provide resources quickly.

Pro or Con

2. His donations provided one year's worth of lab supplies and new textbooks.

Pro because: _____

Con because: _____

3. He was able to provide for one teacher who educates 150 students in a year.

Large Impact or Small Impact

The School Group

1. Fundraising and calling for school board action takes some time to get organized.

Pro or Con

2. The group's efforts resulted in funding for about a year and a half and prepared future volunteers to continue to help.

Pro because: _____

Con because: _____

3. The group raised money and awareness for classroom needs.

Large Impact or Small Impact

The School Board

1. It can take more than a year for a referendum on school funding to get passed and going.

Pro or Con

2. The new tax money will go to the school, where it can be used by Ms. Nelson and others.

Pro because: _____

Con because: _____

3. The entire school is able to benefit from this funding increase for years to come.

Large Impact or Small Impact

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name: _____

The Individual

Characteristics

_____ person doing something to address a problem

PRO: Gives a sense of ownership and _____

CON: Hard to get _____ to do more



Scope

- One person can make an _____ at any level. Some actions will be small, but other actions can _____ others or even _____ the government.

Examples

- Create a _____ about an issue
- _____ to people about the problem
- Get other people to _____
- _____ time or _____ money

Write one specific example here:

Can lead to...

The Group

Characteristics

A group of people _____ to address a problem

PRO: Greater ability to bring about _____ and to pool _____

CON: _____ change the laws to fix problems



Scope

- Groups can be _____ or small, _____ or national
- They can be made up of all _____, or have paid _____ who organize the group.

Examples

- A group of _____ picks up trash at the park once a month.
- The _____ Society's volunteers and employees provide homes, medical care, and shelter for _____.

Write one specific example here:

Both can influence...

The Government

Characteristics

The government can enact _____ and _____. It can also make sure that these laws are _____:

PRO: Ability to make _____ through laws

CON: Actions usually cost _____ money and may restrict _____



Scope

- The local, state and federal governments can influence anyone living in their _____.

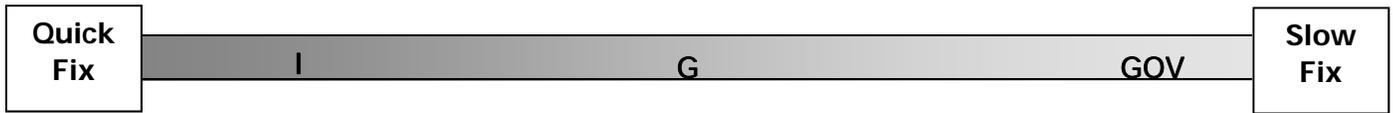
Examples

- A city _____ fines people for littering.
- Federal money is used to improve _____ highways and bridges.
- A state lifts its _____ on air pollution so power plants can produce more _____ for homes during a cold snap.

Write one more example here:

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name:

Speed and Impact. Place **I** for individual action, **G** for group action, and **GOV** for government action on the best place on the spectrum for each quality. The first one is done for you.



Who Can Help? Read each story and decide which type of actors would be the most effective at solving each problem, then suggest a solution.

Scenario # 1.

The county park is home to a large playground, small fishing pond, and jogging path. The park is used by many people in the community all year long. Recently, people have become concerned with the amount of trash on the ground and in the pond. There are trash cans scattered around the park, but they do not seem to be helping to end the littering. What can be done to clean up the park?

Select One:

- Individual
Action
- Group
Action
- Government
Action

My solution Idea:

Scenario# 2.

The local high school has always provided after-school tutoring to students three days a week. Due to recent budget cutbacks, the school has had to cancel the program because it cannot afford to pay the tutors. Is there a way for the tutoring program to continue without the need for funding?

Select One:

- Individual
Action
- Group
Action
- Government
Action

My solution Idea:

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name:

Scenario # 3.

A classmate has been diagnosed with leukemia and will need a lot of expensive medical care. Her parents cannot afford the hospital bills and travel costs involved with her treatment. Is there some way to help the family with these costs?

Select One:

Individual
Action

Group
Action

Government
Action

My solution Idea:

Scenario # 4

The main intersection in front of the middle school does not have a stop sign or stoplight. There have been many accidents before and after school when parents pick up and drop off their children. There have also been a few close calls with pedestrians almost getting hit by cars. How can this intersection be made safer for walkers and drivers?

Select One:

Individual
Action

Group
Action

Government
Action

My solution Idea:

Brainstorm! Now you have a better understanding of what individuals, groups, and the government can do to solve problems in the community. Think about the problem your class has selected and come up with one solution for each type of action.

What could an individual do?

What could a group do?

What could your county government do?

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call?

INDIVIDUAL
ACTION

GROUP ACTION

COUNTY
GOVERNMENT
ACTION

The Individual

Characteristics

One person doing something to address a problem

PRO: Gives a sense of ownership and involvement

CON: Hard to get funding to do more



Scope

- One person can make an impact at any level. Some actions will be small, but other actions can inspire others or even influence the government.

Examples

- Create a website about an issue.
- Talk to people about the problem.
- Get other people to act.
- Volunteer time or donate money.

Write one specific example here:

Can lead to...

The Group

Characteristics

A group of people organized to address a problem

PRO: Greater ability to bring about change and to pool resources

CON: Cannot change the laws to fix problems



Scope

- Groups can be large or small, local or national
- They can be made up of all volunteers, or have paid employees who organize the group.

Examples

- A group of volunteers pick up trash at the park once a month.
- The Humane Society's volunteers and employees provide homes, medical care, and shelter for animals.

Write one specific example here:

Both can influence...

The Government

Characteristics

The government can enact laws and policies. It can also make sure that these laws are enforced.

PRO: Ability to make change through laws

CON: Actions usually cost taxpayer money and may restrict freedoms



Scope

- The local, state, and federal governments can influence anyone living in their jurisdictions.

Examples

- A city law fines people for littering.
- Federal money is used to improve national highways and bridges.
- A state lifts its limit on air pollution so power plants can produce more heat for homes during a cold snap.

Write one more example here:

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name: _____

****TEACHER GUIDE****

Speed and Impact. Place **I** for individual action, **G** for group action, and **GOV** for government action on the best place on the spectrum for each quality.



Who Can Help? Read each story and decide which type of actors would be the most effective at solving each problem, then suggest a solution.

Scenario # 1.

The county park is home to a large playground, small fishing pond, and jogging path. The park is used by many people in the community all year long. Recently, people have become concerned with the amount of trash on the ground and in the pond. There are trash cans scattered around the park, but they do not seem to be helping to end the littering. What can be done to clean up the park?

Select One:

- Individual
Action
- Group
Action
- Government
Action

My solution Idea:

Any answer could be selected. Individuals could not litter and pick up trash, a group could pick up trash and inform the public about not littering, the government could hire a park keeper or enforce anti-littering laws with fines.

Scenario# 2.

The local high school has always provided after-school tutoring to students three days a week. Due to recent budget cutbacks, the school has had to cancel the program because it cannot afford to pay the tutors. Is there a way for the tutoring program to continue without the need for funding?

Select One:

- Individual
Action
- Group
Action
- Government
Action

My solution Idea:

The government is the least likely option. Individuals could volunteer their time to tutor. A group could join together and organize volunteers to cover the tutoring needs.

Step Three: Who You Gonna Call? Name:

****TEACHER GUIDE****

Scenario # 3.

A classmate has been diagnosed with leukemia and will need a lot of expensive medical care. Her parents cannot afford the hospital bills and travel costs involved with her treatment. Is there some way to help the family with these costs?

Select One:

Individual
Action

Group
Action

Government
Action

The government does not really have an action available (unless universal health care is mentioned). Individuals could donate money or help. A group of people could have fundraisers to collect money for the family.

Scenario # 4

The main intersection in front of the middle school does not have a stop sign or stoplight. There have been many accidents before and after school when parents pick up and drop off their children. There have also been a few close calls with pedestrians almost getting hit by cars. How can this intersection be made safer for walkers and drivers?

Select One:

Individual
Action

Group
Action

Government
Action

My solution Idea:

It will take government action to put a stop sign or stoplight at the intersection. The school or a group of citizens could organize a crossing guard.

Brainstorm! Now you have a better understanding of what individuals, groups and the government can do to solve problems in the community. Think about the problem your class has selected and come up with one solution for each type of action.

What could an individual do?

What could a group do?

What could your county government do?