



**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: DEMOCRACY AND ME**

(45 minutes in class, additional time out of class)

**OBJECTIVE**

Students learn the characteristics of a democratic society and how they can improve where they live.

**MATERIALS**

*Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy* handout

**GET READY**

- ✓ Copy the *Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy* handout so you have a copy for each student or make a transparency of it for an overhead projector.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- ✓ Ask students, *How many have heard of the word “democracy”? Does anyone know what it means? What other words do you think of when you hear “democracy”?* List your students’ ideas on the board.
- ✓ Read to your students the following definition: *A democracy is a society where the people are involved in making many of the decisions about what happens.*
- ✓ Ask students, *How do people in the United States help make decisions about the government, schools, laws, and other important aspects of our lives?* (Possible answers include attending public meetings, writing letters to public officials, running for public office, and serving on a local board. If students do not mention voting, make sure to tell them that it’s one of the major ways citizens help make decisions).

- ✓ Ask students, *Is democracy just for grown-ups? Does it have anything to do with kids?* Accept all responses. Then ask, *How many of you ride a bike? Wear pajamas? Use a local park? Drink water? Breathe the air?* Explain to your students that the laws made by our local, state, and federal governments determine what is acceptable and what isn’t with these and many other situations. The government affects most of our everyday activities, including the fact that students are required, at this moment, to be in school!
- ✓ Use the *Ways I Can Participate in Our Democracy* handout on an overhead projector and ask students to identify the things that kids can do to participate in our democracy. Have a discussion with the class after completing the handout. Are your students surprised that they can contribute to our democracy in so many ways? While elementary school students are not old enough to vote, they can still influence how adults vote and otherwise contribute to improving society. (Instead of using an overhead projector, you can copy the handout for individuals or groups, depending on their reading abilities.)
- ✓ After completing the handout, ask your students to choose a class activity. (Have your students vote by ballot or by a show of hands.) The class should come up with a plan to carry out one of the ideas on the handout: recycling, donating food, etc.
- ✓ The class should carry out this plan and document it with photos and writings. The class can create a bulletin board showcasing the work they did.

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY: DEMOCRACY AND ME** (continued)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ★ *What is a democracy?*
- ★ *Can anyone share how they participate in our democracy?*
- ★ *Do you think we made a difference in our community? How?*
- ★ *Do you think it is our responsibility to help our community? Why?*
- ★ *What other ways will you be able to participate in our democracy when you are an adult?*



## WAYS I CAN PARTICIPATE IN OUR DEMOCRACY

Directions: Circle the ideas listed below that are ways kids can help their community.

Picking up trash

Writing to an elected official

Following the laws

Voting in public elections

Listening to or reading the news

Donating money

Attending a public meeting

Talking to an adult about voting

Visiting someone who is lonely

Writing a letter to a newspaper

Talking to friends about a  
community problem

Calling the mayor about a  
community problem

Speaking at a public meeting

Distributing flyers

Raising money for a good cause  
in the community

Making get well cards for  
children in the hospital

Volunteering at a nursing home

Creating artwork that teaches

Donating food or clothing

Recycling

Can you think of any other ways kids can participate in democracy?

Write them here...