

This packet contains

Free 4th Grade Lesson Plans

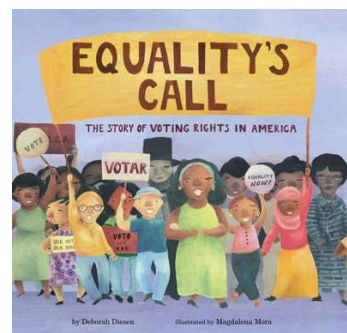
on the topics of

- Letter to a Congressperson • Community Activity •
- Informative Writing •
- Election Day • MLK Jr. Day •

This packet contains five free 4th Grade lesson plans to support active student learning about fairness, democracy, and voting.

Created by early childhood educator Karen Keesling, the lesson plans use *Equality's Call* and other picture books to help students explore important civics concepts as well as SEL competencies.

The lesson plans can be used individually or as a series. The five plans in this packet center around the theme of using communication to improve one's community.



Topics covered are:

1. Writing a letter to a Congressperson
2. Choosing a community cause
3. Writing an informative article
4. Voting/Election Day
5. MLK Jr. Day

Each plan includes virtual learning adaptations.

You may make modifications to the lesson plans to tailor the plans to your students' needs. If you would prefer a Word document (rather than this PDF), please just email to request.

We welcome your feedback on these lesson plans. We'd love to hear about your students' responses to the activities, as well as your comments and suggestions. Please send your feedback and input to deborah@deborahdiesen.com. **Thank you!**

4th Grade Lesson Plan 1: Letter to a Congressperson

Lesson Plan created by Karen Keesling

1. Target Grade/Subject
4th Grade-Literacy

2. Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8

Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

3. Learning Objective (s)

Students will learn who their representatives are in Congress and write a persuasive letter about something that is important to them.

4. Assessment (s)

The teacher will gauge participation and understanding by using a combination of techniques (e.g. modeling, questioning/observation, guided practice, oral responding, independent practice, etc.).

5. Description of Learning Activities:
Introductory Activity (Connection)

Teacher will read *Equality's Call*.

Teaching Point and Modeling

Teacher will ask what do students think “The journey’s not over. The work hasn’t ended” means. Teacher will ask students, to brainstorm some ideas of things they would like to see happen in their neighborhood, city, country etc. Teacher should take notes of ideas on chart paper to refer to later. Teacher may model, “I think college should be free for every student” or “I think recycling should be made easier.” Teacher will then ask students who has the power to make these changes happen. Teacher should eventually ask students if they have heard of the words “senator” and “representative”? Teacher may then ask students if they know what a senator is? If they know what a representative is? Teacher should explain that they are people who were elected to help make the changes we want to see. Teacher will explain that students will write a letter to their senators or representative or

president (teacher can either lead students to computer lab or show students how to look them up on classroom computer-see notes for websites) explaining why they want their elected official to take action. Teacher may want to model how to write the letter and outline key components:

1. Salutation
2. Statement introducing who you are and the topic
3. 3 facts to support your view
4. Personal story (optional)
5. Concluding salutation

E.g.

Dear Ms./Mr. XXX (**Salutation**)

I am a teacher at xxx school. I am writing because I want you to introduce a law that would allow free college for all students. (**Who I am and topic**)

Free college means that so many more students could learn.

Students who go to college meet many people who help them get careers.

More qualified people in careers helps everyone, not just students. (**Three facts**)

My father was a doctor but when he came to this country they wouldn't let him be a doctor unless he went to college. He didn't have enough money for it and became a school custodian. That's one less doctor because we don't have free education.

(**personal story**)

Sincerely,
Teacher X

Guided Practice (Active Engagement)

Depending on computer availability either whole class will look up which elected official they will write to and some background information about their topic or only small groups will do this, while other students start outlining their letters and what they want to say.

Share

Students will then share with each other their letters and think about ways to make their writing stronger. When letters are done, class can take a trip to the post office or mailbox to send them off or they can email them to their representatives.

Teacher should ask students how it feels to write to someone in power? Are there ways they can take action even if they're too young to vote? Is it important to be involved?

Virtual Learning Adaptations

Lesson will follow same as above. Teacher will either give students time to look up their representatives/senators or have it ready for them and put it up on a shared screen/or hold it up to the screen. Teacher will give students time to write their letters. Students will share either in a breakout room or on google docs. Teacher should ask students how it feels to write to someone in power? Are there ways they can take action even if they're too young to vote? Is it important to be involved? Teacher can suggest that students either print-out and mail their letters to the representatives or email them to the representatives. Teacher may want to later on take a poll to see how many students who sent out their letters received responses.

Teacher Note

Some websites to direct your students to:

How to locate your representative and use the websites:

<https://bit.ly/33vYSv1>

<http://www.ala.org/everyday-advocacy/virtual-library-legislative-day/contact-your-us-senators-and-representatives#:~:text=Senator%3A%201%20Visit%20the%20Senate%20website%20%28%20www.senate.gov,an%20online%20contact%20form%20%28forms%20vary%20by%20Senator%29>

Senators:

<https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>

Representatives:

(May want to prep students ahead of time to know their zip code so they can search in top right hand corner)

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>

The President/White House

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/get-involved/write-or-call/>

4th Grade Lesson Plan 2: Community Activity & Causes

Lesson Plan created by Karen Keesling

1. Target Grade/Subject
4th Grade-Literacy
2. Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
3. Learning Objective (s)
Students will become actively involved in their communities by picking a cause they want to take-on
4. Assessment (s)
The teacher will gauge participation and understanding by using a combination of techniques (e.g. modeling, questioning/observation, guided practice, oral responding, independent practice, etc.).
5. Description of Learning Activities:
Introductory Activity (Connection)
Teacher will refer to *Equality's Call* and ask students to think back to the contributions people made so that everyone could vote (teacher may want to give examples, e.g. women protested for right to vote, amendments to the constitution to allow black men to vote etc.). Teacher should then explain that students will think about what they want to create for their community, how can they make it greater than they found it?

Teaching Point and Modeling

Teacher will ask students to think about different causes they may want to get involved in. If class can't think of any, teacher may want to offer some suggestions to get them going (e.g. collecting food/blankets for the homeless, raising money for something the school needs, collecting money for a charity, volunteering at a senior citizen living center, reading to the pre-k classes etc.) Teacher will take note of all the students' suggestions on chart paper. Once enough of a list has been generated, teacher will ask students to write their names and put it on a post-it next to the two that they are most excited about. Teacher will then break up students into groups (ideally aligning with the ones that they wanted to get involved in) and explain to students that in their groups they will need to write a plan about what their goal is for their cause and what steps they will take to achieve their cause. Teacher may want to model:

1. What is the goal?

2. What do you need to do it?
3. When will you do it? For how long?
4. Who do you need to talk with to make it happen?

Collecting food for the homeless

- We will get boxes to collect food
- We will put up signs around school to let people know about it
- We will research groups, food kitchens, shelters etc. to see where and when to donate the food
- We will ask local supermarkets/restaurants if they have any food to share or if we can put up collection boxes there
- We will send out a flier that will go home with every student
- We will collect food for one week

Guided Practice (Active Engagement)

Students will come up with an outline and steps needed to make plan happen. Students may want to decide who will take on each task.

Share

Students will share their plans with the other groups and ask for suggestions/feedback of what else they can do. Teacher should ask students how they are feeling about their plans? How does it feel to do something for your community?

Virtual Learning Adaptations

Same as above, though teacher should ask students to think of things they can do from their homes to make a difference (e.g. start a letter/postcard campaign to stop bullying, make videos of them reading to send to Pre-K students, do a kickstarter campaign etc.)

Teacher Note

This will eventually lead to students carrying out these plans. Teacher may want to check with principal to make sure they have administration's support. Teacher should also make sure plans are feasible and guide students to good resources (such as local soup kitchen contacts) to help them achieve their goals.

4th Grade Lesson Plan 3: Informative Writing

Lesson Plan created by Karen Keesling

1. Target Grade/Subject
4th Grade-Literacy
2. Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.3
Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
3. Learning Objective (s)
Students will write informative pieces in a school newspaper about their ideas on how to make their communities better than how they found them
4. Assessment (s)
The teacher will gauge participation and understanding by using a combination of techniques (e.g. modeling, questioning/observation, guided practice, oral responding, independent practice, etc.).
5. Description of Learning Activities:
Introductory Activity (Connection)
Teacher will hold up newspapers and ask students if they've ever read them before. Teacher will pass around different newspaper articles (can be articles in student magazines as well like *Time for Kids*) for students to look at and ask them to turn and talk with a partner to discuss what the point of the newspaper article was. Teacher should then have whole group share major points (to inform about X, to tell the reader why X is important etc.) Teacher should ask students how they felt after they read the article.

Teaching Point and Modeling

Teacher will refer to *Equality's Call* and explain that to make change happen, often you need to get many people involved. Teacher will tell students that they will write articles (either for already established school newspaper or they will create their own school newspaper) about why they think the cause they picked from Lesson Plan 1 or 2 was important (if teacher didn't do Lesson Plans 1 or 2, teacher may want to ask students to think about something that they would do to make their community better than it is right now). Teacher may want to highlight main parts of an article by using one of the articles teacher distributed in introductory activity

1. Title
2. Byline
3. Hook, an interesting way to get your reader interested
4. Facts that support your story

5. Conclusion

Guided Practice (Active Engagement)

Students may need some time to research their topic. Students will practice writing their own articles about a topic they selected from earlier. This lesson plan could take course over multiple sessions.

Share

Students will swap the articles they've written with a partner and each partner will give feedback on how to make the article more compelling. Teacher should then ask students what they think/hope will happen when people read their articles.

Virtual Learning Adaptations

Teacher should send out article(s) well before class so students have time to look through them and read them. Teacher should then follow lesson plan from above but for the share, teacher may wish to have breakout rooms, shared google docs or have students record themselves reading their articles on Flip Grid so they can swap their work and give feedback. Teacher should ask students what they think/hope will happen when people read their articles.

Teacher Note

This lesson plan may take course over a few days. Teacher should ultimately try to have class create a published version of all the articles either in a print or online format to be shared with the rest of the school and parents. Class can vote on title if there is no existing school newspaper already. Teacher should check with principal to make sure it is okay to send out to entire parent body/PTA etc.

4th Grade Lesson Plan 4: Election Day

Lesson Plan created by Karen Keesling

1. Target Grade/Subject
4th Grade-Literacy
2. Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.3
Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
3. Learning Objective (s)
The entire 4th grade will vote on one project they want to work on to make the community better
4. Assessment (s)
The teacher will gauge participation and understanding by using a combination of techniques (e.g. modeling, questioning/observation, guided practice, oral responding, independent practice, etc.).
5. Description of Learning Activities:
Introductory Activity (Connection)
Prior to this lesson 4th grade teachers may want to share the top one or two ideas that their class came up with for the project they wanted to take on from Lesson Plans 1 & 2. (If other grade level teachers haven't done previous lesson plans or don't want to do whole grade project, then teacher should use the classes previously generated list from Lesson Plan 2, though they may want to limit it to 3 choices, and have class vote on what their top choice is). Teacher will explain to the class that today is Election Day and ask what they know about it. Teacher may want to refer to Equality's Call and remind class of the long journey it took to get people the right to vote today. Teacher may want to point out in illustrations how each time, more and more people join to fight for the right to vote. Teacher should then explain that real change comes when groups of people work together. Today will be the day that 4th grade comes together to vote on what project they will take on to change their community.

Teaching Point and Modeling

Teachers will ask students to cast a ballot on which the student will write the name of the project they want to the grade to take on. Teacher will explain that it is a secret ballot, no one will know who voted for which activity. Teacher may want to have the names of each project written on the board so ballots will all be uniform and easier for counting.

Guided Practice (Active Engagement)

If school has enough digital devices available, students in each 4th grade class will cast their votes online to do a live poll (e.g. through Mentimeter app or Zoom etc.) for which project they want to take on. If school doesn't have enough digital devices, students can cast ballots in class. Once all the votes are cast each teacher will broadcast to the other classes (via live recording) what the winning project was from their class and the number of votes it got. If 2 or 3 totally different projects win for each class, teachers should have students vote again between two choices. Teachers again should share via live recording with each class the results. If there is a tie, teacher should ask students what they think they should do and follow students' suggestions.

Share

After all results are in and the project has been adopted, teachers should ask students how it felt to vote. How did it feel if they didn't get the choice they wanted? Would it make them want to vote again in the future? Will they still want to help do the project? Is there a better way to decide which project they should do besides voting? Teacher should ask students how did this experience relate to voting for a president/representative on Election Day? Teacher may want to elicit that inevitably; one side will not get the candidate they wanted. Sometimes it makes people and representatives/senators fight and try to stop the other side from winning, sometimes it makes them work together. In some cases, the President wasn't picked right away, and votes have to be counted and recounted to figure out who won the election.

Virtual Learning Adaptations

Similar to above, instead of writing their choice of project and putting it in a ballot, teachers can create an online poll (e.g. Mentimeter, Doodle or Survey Monkey) and students can watch the results come in as they vote. If there is need of a run-off, teachers can create new poll and have students vote. Teachers should have students share how it felt to vote that way and see the results come in. Teacher should ask if any students want to share how it felt to vote and not get the project they wanted.

Teacher Note

This will take a lot of coordination between grade-level teachers but will be so much more meaningful for the students if they're all in it together. Teachers will need approval from administration.

4th Grade Lesson Plan 5: MLK Jr. Day

Lesson Plan created by Karen Keesling

1. Target Grade/Subject
4th Grade-Literacy
2. Common Core Standards
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2
Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
3. Learning Objective (s)
To learn about the Civil Rights Movement and its contributions to society
4. Assessment (s)
The teacher will gauge participation and understanding by using a combination of techniques (e.g. modeling, questioning/observation, guided practice, oral responding, independent practice, etc.).
5. Description of Learning Activities:
Introductory Activity (Connection)
It is expected that prior to this lesson, class will have spent time learning about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Teaching Point and Modeling

Teacher will ask students what they remember or stands out to them about the Civil Rights Movement and what they think Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was fighting for. Teacher will hand out different Martin Luther King Jr. quotations (see note) and ask students to do a turn and talk and share their quotation and what they think it means. Teacher should elicit from class that the Civil Rights Movement, like Black Lives Matter wasn't just about improving life for Black/African Americans, it was for all of society. Teacher will give examples like how Black Panther movement created free breakfast plans that were adopted by the schools or how integrated schools led to greater understanding and learning. Teacher will then ask students to come up with their own inspirational quotations that they think could lead to a better society (teacher may want to model e.g. "It doesn't take a bull to stand up for those who are bullied, sometimes the smallest are the strongest" or "Fighting for what's right doesn't take might, it takes insight.")

Guided Practice (Active Engagement)

Students will write their own quotations on index cards for what they think should be an inspiration to help others. They may want to color it or decorate it or change their handwriting for it.

Share

Students will place their quotations into a container/envelope and each student will read the quotation that they drew. They will share what they think it means. The author of the quotation may want to explain what they intended it to mean. Then it will be hung somewhere in the room so students can look at it for the rest of the year. Teacher can ask students what sorts of feelings they experience from reading/seeing/hearing the quotations.

Virtual Learning Adaptations

Same as above, though teacher may want to send out quotations ahead of time to students and have students discuss in break out rooms, or they can record themselves reading the MLK Jr. Quotation they received and explain what it meant to them.

For sharing the quotations, they wrote, students should put up their quotation into a shared document so that all students can read each other's quotes. Teacher can then ask what feelings students get from reading the quotations their classmates wrote. Teacher should save the working collaborative document and may want to begin each class by reading one of them and sending it out to students to keep and put up somewhere (e.g. on their notebook, by their computer etc.) as inspiration.

Teacher Note

Teacher can print and cut out quotations from here:

<https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/martin-luther-king-jr-quotes>

For added engagement, teacher may want to begin or end each class with one of the quotations the students have written or may want to ask students if they want to vote and adopt one as their class motto.