Active Citizenship Today

Teacher Handbook

Second Edition

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Teacher Handbook

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A Joint Project of Constitutional Rights Foundation and Close Up Foundation

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Introduction to the Second Edition of the *ACT Teacher Handbook*

After a decade of seeing the Active Citizenship Today (ACT) program implemented in schools throughout the country, we have learned from teachers and students what would make the program better. Responding to their feedback, we have developed the second editions of the *ACT Teacher Handbook* and the *ACT Field Guide*. We have streamlined the materials while keeping ACT's flexibility to be used in a variety of settings.

Here are some of the changes in the second edition:

- We have created an active web page called ACT Online. (Go to **www.crf-usa.org** and click on **Programs** and **ACT Online**.) As we streamlined the teacher and student materials, we moved some things to this web page so that we could keep them updated and add new information periodically. ACT Online has links and information for every part of the *ACT Field Guide* and for much of the *ACT Teacher Handbook.*

- Teachers and students continue to ask for examples of how others implement ACT and for sample student service-learning projects. ACT Online is a place where we can collect and share this information from you and your students. For ACT Online to be most effective, we hope you and your students will participate in providing tips, samples of your work, and valuable information to inform others about what makes ACT successful.

- The student *Field Guide* and the *Teacher Handbook* are more aligned with each other to provide a more structured, developmental experience for students.

- The introduction in the *Teacher Handbook* has been updated with new research and information about civic education, service learning, and using community resources effectively.

- A final section has been added to the *Teacher Handbook* explaining how ACT can be implemented as a school- or district-wide program.

- The introduction to the *Teacher Handbook* shows how ACT can link to content standards in subject areas such as civics, government, history, language arts, and science.

- The *Teacher Handbook* contains 15 classroom lessons to guide students through the ACT process using information from the *Field Guide* and ACT Online.

- The student *Field Guide* is shorter and in a smaller, more user-friendly format. We have moved all the skills and tools, such as tips on telephoning, letter writing, and opinion polling, into one section. These skills can be useful at any time in the ACT process, and students can now reference them more easily.

With these changes, we hope that you and your students will find ACT more efficient to implement and more powerful in terms of the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions students gain.

Lesson 1: Drawing Your Community

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe at least three community needs.

- Identify and describe at least three community resources.

- Cooperate with other group members in making a collective drawing.

Materials and Preparation

- Chart paper and markers

- *ACT Field Guide*–1 per student

Overview

In this lesson, students begin to define "community" and explore their first impressions of the community.

First, students brainstorm elements common to every community. Next, working in small groups, they create drawings to illustrate important elements of their own community. Finally, using their drawings, they discuss their impressions of the community with the whole class.

Procedure

A. Brainstorm and Discussion—What's a Community?

1. Explain that today students are going to find out how they picture and think about their community. Have students read "Drawing Your Community," on page 14 of the *ACT Field Guide*.

2. Write "community" on the board. Ask students to brainstorm what makes up a community (people, buildings, streets, schools, stores, offices, radio and television stations, recreation facilities, hospitals, etc.).

3. Tell students that they are going to think of problems and resources in their community. Explain that resources can be people, places, and things that can help address problems. If necessary, clarify the community you would like students to think about, e.g., school, neighborhoods, the whole city, etc.

B. Small-Group Activity—Drawing Your Community

1. Have students read "How Would You Describe Your Community" on page 15 of the *ACT Field Guide*.

2. Divide the class into groups of 4–5 students and distribute chart paper and markers to each group. Have each group draw a picture that illustrates problems and resources in their community. (Refer them to the instructions in the *Field Guide.*)

3. When students have completed the activity, have each group explain its drawing to the class. Debrief the activity by asking:

   - What problems were most commonly mentioned? Which resources?

   - Do you think anything in the community could be considered both a problem and a resource? Explain.

   - Which problems mentioned only exist in our community? Which are common to other communities?

Reflection Ideas

Choose from the following suggestions for student reflection:

- Hold a group discussion using these questions: What was the most important thing you discovered while drawing your community? Do you have anything to add now?

- Have students write a journal entry about how they see their community.

- Have them create a time capsule featuring items that they believe best describe their community. Present the time capsule to your school and place it on display.