

Unit 3 - Student-Led Action Projects

This lesson is designed to help students identify potential actions they could take and then help them take those actions.

NGSS connections: **Practices:** Asking Questions and Defining Problems; Planning and Carrying Out Investigations; Analyzing and Interpreting Data; Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information; Engaging in Argument from Evidence; Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions; **CCCs:** Patterns; Cause and Effect; Systems and System Models; **DCI:** HS-ETS1-1.

Starting point for instructors

- Prior to this lesson, work through [Unit 3 - Taking Action: Brainstorming and Planning](#) with your students to help brainstorm ideas they could take.
- Choose whether your timeline allows for students to think and work for one day, a week, or over the rest of the term. Many of these activities below could be implemented outside of class time or on an online discussion board platform. As an instructor, you may want to assign them, then have students bring in finished products to share. Alternatively, you could choose to spend a great deal of time working through several of the activities below collaboratively in class.
- Do [Unit 0 - Setting the Stage](#) before this, and review norms if needed.

[A. Whole Class Works Together](#)

[B. Individual/Small Group Action Projects](#)

A. Whole Class Works Together

Whole Class Day of Action Plan & Implementation [30-60 minutes]

Part I:

Motivated by youth activism, devote a day for students to take action. After [Unit 3 - Taking Action: Brainstorming and Planning](#), the facilitator asks the class to continue their planning. Ask students to now discuss their ideas as a whole class. Remind them to include all voices and to identify some action that all students agree on taking. The students' decision has to be acceptable to everyone, has to relate somehow to what has been discussed, and has to be actionable in the amount of time available. Beyond that, it's their call. If possible, the instructor should consider leaving the room to empower students' choice.

Possible framing for your students:

"If we're going to take collective action, it's important that we engage in a collective process to get there. We're not going to choose a project by voting and going with the majority, you're going to discuss until you find a project that everyone is OK with in the room."



Part II:

You can schedule the Day of Action for a few weeks later, which gives you a chance to collect some resources and make some connections that would be useful to your students, and turn them loose. In other words, once you hear the students' plan, you can get to work on supporting it. Will they need art-making supplies? To have a meeting with an administrator? Here are some [Project Examples](#) to check out.

B. Individual/Small Group Action Projects

Small group or individual brainstorming in class. [30-60 minutes]

Students work individually or in small groups to create a plan of action that has a goal and can describe ACTIONS to take that move society forward. Share this with the students:

1. **Be creative** - [here is a list of examples](#) to get your brain started! Here is a [handout to make your plan](#).
2. **Be realistic** about your goals. Think about your time constraints. For example, "You are expected to prepare your plan over a few hours during the first week, then act out your plan for ~4 hours the second week, including 30-60 min of reflection. Start with one small idea - if you have time, you can expand! Make it a thing you can do/start in 1-2 weeks."
3. **Be specific** when stating your actions. Your goals should be tangible and measurable. If you cannot determine when something will be complete, it needs clarifying. Avoid words like "more" or "less" or "better" when describing your plan. Instead, use exact terms that describe the **action**, number, or *timeframe*. You can think about the "5 Ws"... Who, what, when, where, how.

Instructor Note:

Encourage students to focus on what *they* can do. Sometimes students tend to write about things that others can do, which is valuable but not the focus of this lesson.



Action. [30-120+ minutes]

This part of the project could be outside of class, use one class period, or several classes. Giving some time in class for students to work can provide more collaboration and cross-talk that produces better results and more excitement. Ask students to implement their plan within the given timeframe and let them know that they should be prepared to share what they have done in class.

Here are two examples of assignments handouts that instructors give to their students to start:

- [Example Assignment #1](#)
- [Example Assignment #2](#)

Share out [20-60 minutes]



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Students should get the opportunity - at least a couple of minutes - to share out what they did for their project. Framing this as an ongoing effort can make space for thinking about further action. Consider having them share some of the responses to the Post-Lesson Homework (below) in addition to their projects.

C. Post-Lesson Homework

Reflection & Evaluation

Respond to the following questions *on your own* (even if you worked in a group):

1. What did you do or make? Provide a short description of what you did.
2. What was your reason/rationale for doing the project? (what's the need you saw?)
3. Was there a particular class, reading, online resource that made you think of doing this? Make sure to give credit where it's due!
4. Who do you hope will see it/be influenced by it, and what do you hope they do?
5. How do you hope it will be used/viewed/seen by other people?
6. What barriers/challenges did you come across? How did you work to move beyond them?
7. How do you know that you have accomplished an "action"? Share results from your work here (e.g., meeting minutes, hours volunteering at a particular place, pictures, actions accomplished, notes from takeaways, a poster, website, social media post, etc.).

Consider using the evaluation and reflection tools listed at the end of [Unit 3 - Taking Action: Brainstorming and Planning](#) lesson.

Homework Debrief: Several weeks later check-in

Consider checking in on the action plans that have continued to be relevant. This works well with a [Write-Pair-Share](#) activity. It also helps if you warn the students ahead of time so they are (perhaps) motivated to accomplish more by the "deadline" of the discussion.

- *Write:* Ask students the following questions:
 - What action have they done since their last share out?
 - What barriers to acting have you come across?
- *Pair:* Ask one student to share their challenges of implementing further action and then both students brainstorm solutions to those challenges. Have the partners switch roles and focus on the listener's challenges.
- *Share:* Ask students to share solutions that may support other students in achieving their goals.

Resources

- [Lesson Plan Resources](#)



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