Title: A Dangerous Street and Civic Action

Level: Elementary
Length: 3 days

Overview: The lesson uses a story by Daphne Liu about a young boy who sees a friend get hurt playing in the street and his attempt to get local government to make some changes. This lesson contains ELL adaptations; teachers can choose which are appropriate for their classroom.

Colorado Civics Standards:
*Respecting the views and rights of others is a key component in a democratic society.
*The origins, structure, and functions of local government

Evidence Outcomes:
*identify and apply the elements of civil discourse. Elements to include, but not limited to, listening with respect for understanding and speaking in a respectful manner.
*give examples of the relationship between rights and responsibilities.
*identify and explain the services local governments provide and how those services are funded.
*identify and explain a variety of roles leaders, citizens, and others play in local government.

Preparation and Resources:

Essential Vocabulary and Concepts:
Prepare vocabulary cards; include graphics or visual images for each word:
community, rural, urban, suburban, impressed, government, city council, mayor,
neighborhood, decision, ambulance, petition, make an appointment, persistent, agreed

Prepare a graphic to demonstrate sequence time words: first, next, then, finally, suddenly, soon, today

Pre Test Prompt: Draw a place you like in your community
a. Have students tell why they like it.
b. Put drawings together to create a map of the community.

Post Test Prompt: Draw a place you would improve in your community.
a. Have students tell why they would improve it.
b. Post student pictures with their rationales for community improvement.

Map connections: Use maps to demonstrate with students where they live: neighborhoods, communities, cities, and states. What makes a city? What is a neighborhood?
Focus questions for story:
1. What happens to James’ friend?
2. What does James do? Why?
3. Why is the mayor impressed?
4. Why does James have to meet with the mayor twice?

Poetry Resource: Use this as a warm-up to the story.

*Mayor’s Song* by Shirleyann Costigan, from *Avenues*, Hampton-Brown, 2004.

*Mayor’s Song*
The government is meant to serve you.
Busy neighborhoods need care.
If you want a safe community,
Send your letters to the mayor!


1. Identify the theme and genre: Taken from a true story about a boy who changed his community.
2. Introduce the main characters (James Ale and Mayor Kovac) and setting in Davie, Florida. Show visuals or make a visual if you do not have the actual story.

Consider the level of ELL learners:
**Advanced:** Jig-saw the story in small groups, and a teacher directed discussion regarding connections, etc.
**Intermediate:** Teacher reads the story, or plays a tape of the story stopping at intervals to guide the sequence of events; discuss what’s happening as a class.
**Emerging:** Present visuals along with the tape of the story or teacher reading of the story. Guided questioning and sheltered responses are used to guide the discussion and understanding of the story’s events for ELL learners.

Process:
Direct or guide the discussion after each paragraph. Build connections to vocabulary and real world connections to the students’ community. Provide examples and ask students to share connections to events.

Story: “James Ale” written by Daphne Liu, included here as it appears in *Avenues-* Hampton-Brown, 2004:

*It is another sunny day in Davie, Florida. A group of children are playing in the street, as they always do. James Ale waves to his friend. “Hey, Bobby. Catch!” He calls. Then he throws a ball high into the air.*

- **Teacher:** Who plays in the streets? Why would kids play in the street? Does this
happen in your neighborhood?

Suddenly, a car comes speeding around the corner. James shouts, “Look out!” It is too late. Bobby lies on the ground. He is holding his hurt leg. A car hit Bobby!

An ambulance takes Bobby away. He will be OK. James walks slowly home. He feels angry. Kids are already playing in the street again!

“It is not fair,” James thinks. “Kids shouldn’t have to play in the street. Other communities have parks. Our neighborhood needs one, too!” He looks at the small field behind the water plant. “This is the perfect place for a park,” James thinks. “I’m going to ask the City to build one here!”

- **Teacher:** Who is Bobby? What happened to Bobby? How does James feel? What does James decide to do?

Teacher charts student responses; students fill in their sequence graphic organizer.

James writes a petition for a new park. He takes his petition around to everyone in the neighborhood. Fifty kids sign it to show that they want a new park, too. Then James makes an appointment to talk to Mayor Kovac.

**Teacher:** Introduce students to the structure of local government. Link: [https://dola.colorado.gov/lgis/municipalities.jsf](https://dola.colorado.gov/lgis/municipalities.jsf)

Students can locate the name of their community’s mayor and the city council members’ names. Students create a flow chart of their local government leaders.

James shows the mayor his petition. He explains why his neighborhood needs a park. He points to the place on a map where the park should be.

**Teacher:** Guide discussions around the vocabulary word “petition.” Create an opportunity where a petition might be helpful in the classroom. What can we petition the teacher about our classroom? Why would we want to do this? Is it important to all the members of our classroom? What would be the results if we did this petition?

Examples: longer recess, no homework on Friday, chewing gum

Mayor Kovac is impressed. She didn’t expect a nine year old boy to be so organized. Still, she cannot make the decision alone. “Let me show this to the city council,” she says. James smiles and gives her a business card. It has his name and phone number. “Please call anytime,” he says.

Soon James is very busy. He meets with the mayor. He writes letters to other people in the government and to news reporters. He tells everyone about the park. James is persistent. People begin to listen to him.
**Teacher:** A petition is one way to gather support for your idea. It is an appropriate way to find out what the rest of the community thinks of your idea. If you gather enough supporters for your idea, you can take your idea to the next level in your community. Local government responds to ideas that follow a certain process because you have considered the thoughts of the community and how it will improve the community of affect them.

*Finally, the city council asks James to come to a city council meeting. At the meeting Mayor Kovac makes a wonderful announcement: the city council has agreed to build a new park! Everyone cheers.*

*Today the children in Davie have a safe place to play. It’s called James Ale Park. It’s one of the most popular playgrounds in Davie, Florida. The children also have a new hero, James Ale.*

“I had a good idea,” James says, “and I never gave up. It doesn’t matter how old you are. If you are persistent, you can get a lot done.”

**Teacher:** Discuss the events and chart on the sequence organizer/students also fill-in the sequence of the final events and the outcome. Debrief what James Ale did for his community. Have students describe in their own words how James made a difference in his community. How did he go about making change? Did he do it alone? What was the reason why he was successful? Was he being responsible and respecting the power and authority of his local government? Direct the discussion to connect to student petition ideas about their classroom. What might be the next step to make their ideas heard, and what would be the next step to make it a possible outcome?

**Extensions:**

- What would you change in your community? Why?
- Is a park an important part of a community? Why or why not?
- Who do you know that has made a difference in your community? How is that person like James Ale? Write them a thank you note for what they have done for their community.
- Students can role play the “James Ale” story.
- Inform students that changes in the community can come with costs. Who pays for these costs? The community pays for improvements to their community through local taxes. This extension offers opportunities for more connections and lessons.