

OUTLINE FOR THE TEACHER OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE  
FREEDOM SCHOOLS

PURPOSE:

The program of Citizenship education is designed to give the student and participant a comprehensive and workable knowledge of our government and the ways in which it functions on a local, state and national level. The teacher must be aware at all times that he is schooling people for action and thus should try and present his subject with as much animation and interest as he can.

Most of the persons with whom the teacher will be dealing are discouraged and pessimistic about "getting anything done!" Thus this part of the Freedom School program must dispel these attitudes by creating and presenting positive ideas and situations which reverse negative feelings. The most effective way to do this is to present a series of "case studies" which each point up a specific incident or problem and the class analyzes this at the close of the lecture time.

The teacher must be constantly aware that he is teaching people from all different educational levels and experiences; therefore he should try and structure his program and lesson accordingly. The program of citizenship can become a dull and boring thing. We, in the Freedom School must however, overcome the traditional "citizenship school" and bring a more dynamic and fruitful program into being. At all times the teacher must be sensitive to the class and if he feels that there is need for discussion in the middle of a point, he must allow himself to be flexible enough to have the discussion.

Since we are schooling people for action and a role in the vast complex of social change, it might be wise if we spent a portion of the citizenship lesson time on the existing agencies and organizations in the community and how and what they do. It is possible to invite speakers in to give us detailed accounts and answer questions. However, the success of the speaker depends to a large part on how the teacher has prepared and stimulated the class before hand. To many participants the speakers topic may be old hat; but with proper encouragement the student may see the agency in a new and more useful light when he comes to the Freedom School.

Thus we can see that the real purpose for the Citizenship aspect of the Freedom School is to provide the tools and the motivation to the citizens in the Freedom Schools which will allow them to take a more active and meaningful role in the life of their community.

We should stress the importance of the ballot (several sessions will be devoted to this subject and it will be approached in different ways.) We should stress the importance of knowing the laws which protect us as well as those laws which enable us to better our conditions (i.e. Fair Employment laws; Fair Housing laws, etc.). We should also provide information and material on ways to get jobs and homes and what you do if there is discrimination. Information should be provided as to what job retraining programs there are.

In short, the teacher, if he or she is aware and concerned, has no limits on the kinds of curriculum that he can provide. We urge that there be no political overtones or proselytizing. However, discussion of the two parties is certainly necessary.

RESOLUTION:  
SUBJECT: THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT: 1955

(source: Stride Toward Freedom by Martin Luther King)

You might introduce yourself, name, address, and any other information that you feel might be of value. Then outline the program for that session, stating briefly what the subject is, and what you hope you can present. (for example with the Mont. Bus Boycott you might say that the aim of this lesson is to present a Negro Community which had not done anything spectacular in the past and to show how it rocked the world with its challenge and that just ordinary, everyday people took part). Then you might give the lesson...this time telling it in story form. A map might be helpful and also to have the book at hand in order to quote from it if you wanted to. After the story has been told, then ask if there are any reactions, or questions. If there are none and your time is up you might throw out a few to the group and ask them to think about them for next time. If there are some then gage the time for the discussion to end.

ALWAYS allow at least ten minutes at the end of the evening for VOTER REGISTRATION... You as the teacher will be provided with the necessary information...but please pass it on to your students. If everyone there is registered ask them to get friends registered by next Freedom School. If there seem to be a few doubtfuls--then state that the Freedom School will be happy to help anyone with registration as well as answering any questions, they might have.

ODDS AND ENDS:

1. Please make sure that all of the class has registered
2. If you would like to open class with a poem or song or quote about Freedom you certainly may do so, this would help the spirit a great deal.
3. If you find that there are several persons in your class who are willing to take on leadership responsibilities, please make note of them and encourage them to do so.

In direct connection with the last item, it must be remembered by all of us teaching, that we are developing leadership. Therefore, when an individual or group of individuals show interest in doing something on their block please take their names and addresses and phones. Eventually we hope that all people involved in Freedom School will take an active part in setting up block groups, political groups, etc. in their neighborhoods.

ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR AGENDA OF CITIZENSHIP CLASSES:

1. What is a law; where did it come from and what does it do.
2. What is Congress and how does it work.
3. What is the use of voting.
4. The Boston Police Department and my rights.
5. How Harlem Mothers Organized for Better Schools.
6. What are Civil Rights Organizations doing.
7. How does our city government work.
8. What can Boston's Negroes and whites do in the Freedom Movement.
9. How do you organize a Block Group.
10. What is the Fair Housing Commission
11. How effective is letter writing and petitioning.
12. Who are the candidates for election this fall. etc.

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