SCH Preparation: Candy Congressional Hearing

Lesson Overview

Compelling Question

- Can a powerful speech be persuasive?

Suggested Grade(s)	Grades 5–12 Level 2 & Level 3	**Time Required**	Three class periods, plus one summative assessment

Lesson Objectives

- Identify the purpose of a simulated congressional hearing.
- Demonstrate the process and expectations for participating in a simulated congressional hearing.
- Assess the role individuals play in the political process by developing a deeper understanding of constitutional issues and opportunities for civic engagement.

Lesson Assessments

- Students demonstrate their understanding of the components of compelling testimony by applying criteria for powerful presentations to their own and classmates' simulated congressional hearings.
- Students will participate in self-reflection by completing the Democratic Experience Debrief.
- Teachers may assess by using the Assessment Rubric.

Lesson Overview

Civic Skills & Dispositions

- Active learning
- Active listening
- Alternative points of view
- Civil discourse
- Close observation
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Compromise
- Critical thinking
- Goal setting
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Incorporating evidence
- Participating in a democratic experience
- Persistence
- Public speaking
- Reasoning
- Relationship skills
- Self-awareness
- Self-evaluation
- Self-regulation
- Self-management
- Self-reflection
- Sense of purpose
- Social awareness

Civic Competencies

Students will develop their social awareness and positive communication by

- demonstrating a respect for others during our collaborative team experiences and
- practicing active listening to show appreciation for the diversity of perspectives shared during our candy hearing.

Alignments

Center for Civic Education
We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution
(Level 2, third edition, and
Level 3, fourth and fifth editions)

- Simulated congressional hearing experiential learning preparation

Educating for American Democracy Roadmap
Theme #7: A People with Contemporary Debates & Possibilities

- Grades 6–12: Cultivate an understanding of personal interests, motivations, and decisions as civic agents

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

- **D2.His.6.6-8.** Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.
- **D2.His.11.9-12.** Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

Common Core Standards for Literacy in Social Studies

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Supporting Questions

- What is a congressional hearing?
- What makes a powerful simulated congressional hearing testimony?
- What is an effective way to prepare for a simulated congressional hearing?

Texts & Materials

Day 1

- We the People National Finals Overview (Video)
- High School We the People Video Tutorial (Video)
- Candy Congressional Hearing (Slide deck)
- Candy Hearing Research Organizer
- Candy Hearing Research Organizer–Modified
- Candy Research Organizer Example

Day 2

- Audience Observation
- Feedback Collector

Day 3

- Democratic Experience Debrief
- Assessment Rubric

Vocabulary

- **congressional hearing:** Meeting or session of a Senate, House, joint, or special committee of Congress to obtain information and opinions on proposed legislation, conduct an investigation, or evaluate/oversee the activities of a government department or the implementation of a federal law.

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Educator Background

The hearing preparation process is an ideal opportunity to be Instructional and empower all students when educators do the following:

- **Create diverse, inclusive teams:** When forming teams, consider students' backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles. Aim for a mix that encourages collaboration and helps students learn from different perspectives.
- **Set clear expectations:** Be explicit about the goals and expectations for teamwork, speech writing, delivery, and feedback. Share rubrics or guidelines so students know what success looks like.
- **Foster an inclusive classroom:** Build a classroom culture where every student feels safe sharing their ideas. Establish norms for respectful communication, active listening, and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- **Support effective collaboration:** Give students clear strategies for working together—active listening, brainstorming, dividing tasks, and reaching consensus. Make sure every student has a chance to contribute meaningfully.
- **Scaffold speech writing and delivery:** Chunk the process into manageable steps. Provide models, graphic organizers, or templates to guide students as they organize ideas, use evidence, and connect their arguments to constitutional and historical examples.
- **Encourage feedback and reflection:** Include time for peer feedback and self-reflection. Teach students how to give feedback that's specific, respectful, and useful, and help them set goals for continued growth.

Lesson Preparation:

1. The teacher should review the Simulated Congressional Hearing Procedures to become familiar with the steps and timing involved.
2. Arrange students into six teams; these could be the same as their later hearing teams or different teams (at the teacher's discretion).
3. Put their names/candy type into the slideshow template.
4. Purchase snack-sized candy (six different varieties) to give to students (optional).

Additional resources for teacher background include the following:

- Simulated Congressional Hearings: Preparation & Practice (CEAS Pedagogy Video 1)
- Literacy Integration: Vocabulary & Paraphrasing (CEAS Pedagogy Video 2)
- Building Relational Capacity through Peer Feedback (CEAS Pedagogy Video 3)
- Creating Community Agreements (CEAS Pedagogy Video 4)

Educators should preview all lesson materials prior to delivering the lesson.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Greet students upon entry into the classroom, and welcome them to social studies.
2. Using your routine strategy, divide the class into collaborative trio teams, and instruct students to brainstorm the characteristics that make a speech powerful and persuasive.
3. Return to a full-class format and ask a few volunteers to share for their trio team.
4. Display the compelling question: "Can a powerful speech be persuasive?"
5. Allow students to make predictions about the inquiry question, brainstorm possible answers, and formulate their own supporting questions.
6. Play two clips of famous speeches, such as the following:
    - Greatest Recorded Speeches in American History (1933–2008) (Video)
    - Intense Debate at Reparations Hearing (Ta-Nehisi Coates) (Video)
7. As students watch, they should listen for powerful and effective strategies for delivering a speech.
8. Play speeches a second time for comprehension as needed.
9. Encourage students to share characteristics of powerful and persuasive speech techniques observed in the videos. Sample responses may include the following:
    - Spoke with passion
    - Used examples
    - Cited sources
    - Referenced historical and/or current events
    - Had facts
    - Used rhetorical devices, like repetition and analogies, etc.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Desks arranged in tables/clusters are recommended to facilitate better student collaboration.
- Provide speech transcripts or utilize closed captioning to support comprehension.
- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide speeches translated into students' native language as needed.
- Utilize translation options on YouTube.
- Seek out a speech or movie clip that represents the language/culture of your ML students.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Compromise
- Incorporating evidence
- Self-regulation
- Social awareness

Lesson Plan: Day 1

10. Facilitate a brief discussion on which strategies students feel are most important or what they felt was missing from the speeches they heard.
11. Conduct a class vote to finalize a list of three to five powerful and effective speech strategies by a raising of hands or ballot, and capture results on an anchor chart titled, "What makes a powerful speech?"
12. Thank students for participating, and explain that this was a democratic experience voting simulation.
13. Tell students they will decide on criteria for powerful testimony for their own simulated congressional hearing.

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Display the supporting question, "What is a congressional hearing?"
2. Facilitate a brief discussion on how Congress uses congressional hearings and testimony to do its work. Consider showing a video clip of a congressional hearing relevant to your community or curriculum objectives.
3. Explain to students that as part of this class, they will be engaging in simulated congressional hearings that require them to develop testimony and answer questions.
4. Tell students that they will participate in a democratic experience by being informed citizens, collaborating as a team, and presenting to Congress.
5. Play We the People National Finals Overview (Video), and while students watch, they should observe the actions of the students in the recording. Explain to students that this video is from the national competition.
6. Play a short clip from the We the People Tutorial (Video), which shows students engaging in the simulated congressional hearing in a less formal, local setting.
7. Facilitate a brief discussion about the students' observations of each video clip. Possible discussion questions include the following:
    - What did you notice about the procedures?
    - What did you notice about the students' testimony?
    - Did you observe any powerful or effective strategies for delivering speeches?
    - What wonderings do you still have?
8. Tell students that they begin the journey to participating in a simulated congressional hearing and crafting their own testimony.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- To better understand what a simulated congressional hearing is, students can explore this website.
- If uncertainty remains, students could jot questions on note cards for the teacher to answer throughout the lesson.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Encourage students to list observations in their native language first, then translate in order to share with the team.
- Utilize translation options on YouTube.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Close observation
- Social awareness

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Before introducing the candy hearing, review classroom norms and expectations for collaborative teamwork.
2. Using your routine, divide students into six collaborative teams of four or five students each.
3. Share the Candy Congressional Hearing slide deck, and personalize slides to reflect students' teamings and candy assignments.
4. Tell students that as candy experts, they have been tasked with presenting testimony to Congress on why their candy should be chosen as our nation's official candy.
5. Review the steps for the activity and answer student questions.
6. Distribute the Candy Hearing Research Organizer and review to ensure students understand expectations.
7. Team members will collaborate and explain their findings to each other as they complete the organizer.
8. Students will use the internet to research their candy's ingredients, design, and history.
9. Support students to brainstorm ways their candy connects to the United States. Provide the example of Skittles, a rainbow of candies that represents the diversity of our nation.
10. Utilize the Candy Research Organizer Example to support student comprehension of expectations if needed.
11. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors when forming teams.
- Consider modeling how to complete the Candy Hearing Research Organizer together as a class before students collaborate to research their assigned candy to help support concept attainment. An answer key has been provided in the Candy Research Organizer Example.
- Provide the Candy Hearing Research Organizer Modified document with prompts to support emerging researchers.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide access to the slide deck or organizer translated into students' native languages, as needed.

Civic Competencies

- Active learning
- Alternative points of view
- Collaboration
- Relationship skills
- Social awareness

Lesson Plan: Day 1

Elaborate: Apply New Learning

1. Guide student teams to brainstorm ways their candy represents American governmental principles, organization, or history, and why that candy should be chosen by Congress.
2. Explain that as part of their hearing preparation, teams will collaborate to formulate a 150- to 250-word prepared testimony (speech) on why their candy should be chosen.
3. Circulate around the classroom to encourage teamwork, monitor student progress, provide clarification, or answer questions.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Provide a paragraph template with sentence starters for emerging writers, if needed.
- Allow talk-to-tech technology supports as needed.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider allowing students to utilize translation technology options to complete the organizer.

Civic Competencies

- Collaboration
- Compromise
- Critical thinking
- Incorporating evidence
- Sense of purpose

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage

1. Facilitate a brief discussion on student takeaways of the simulated congressional hearing process so far:
    - What aspect of preparation has gone well?
    - What were the benefits of collaborating as a team on the research and written testimony?
    - What is one question you have before your first presentation for feedback?
    - What is one powerful and/or effective speech delivery strategy you hope to employ in your testimony?
2. Explain to students that this activity will help them understand the simulated congressional hearing process, build a relationship with their team, and practice public speaking on a fun topic.
3. Answer any remaining questions on the assignment.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate an answer.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Allow students to collaborate as a team prior to formulating answers.

Civic Competencies

- Persistence
- Reasoning
- Relationship skills
- Self-reflection
- Sense of purpose

Lesson Plan: Day 2

Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Instruct students to return to their collaborative candy teams. Use the slideshow as needed.
2. Revisit the characteristics of a powerful and effective speech by reviewing your "What makes a powerful speech?" anchor chart from Day 1.
3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of physical things we can do to ensure the smooth delivery of our testimony. Possible answers might include the following:
    - Ensure that your shoulders are back and your head is facing forward.
    - Stay calm and take deep breaths.
    - Pace your speaking and take pauses.
    - Don't hold your notes directly in front of your face.
    - Smile!
4. Encourage student volunteers to share and capture answers on the anchor chart.
5. Facilitate a brief class discussion by asking these questions:
    - How can teammates show disagreement on an issue?
    - What can you do to correct misinformation or misunderstanding shared by a teammate?
    - Think about the simulated congressional hearing video clip we saw. What did you notice about the students' testimony?
    - What can you tell about the students' preparations from the testimony you heard?
6. Review today's agenda with the class, which includes the following:
    - Clarify what makes a presentation powerful (strong and convincing).
    - Monitor your team's work habits and goals: How can all students in a team be actively involved?
    - Present the candy hearing testimonials.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.
- Allow sufficient wait time for students to formulate answers individually or as a team.
- Revisit the Candy Congressional Hearing slide deck to review hearing expectations as needed.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Provide discussion questions in students' native language in advance as needed.
- Encourage students to discuss questions in teams to formulate answers.
- Provide the translated version of slide 12 of the Candy Congressional Hearing slide deck to review hearing expectations as needed.

Civic Competencies

- Collaboration
- Goal setting
- Relationship skills
- Sense of purpose

Lesson Plan: Day 2

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Review classroom norms and expectations for both presenter and audience behavior.
2. Allow teams time to practice their testimonies.
3. Reassure them that this is practice.
4. Depending on adult classroom assistance, presentation formats could include one of the following:
    - Teams could present to each other and give each other feedback (each pair would need an adult to supervise).
    - Teams could present one at a time in front of the whole class.
5. Allow for student questions.
6. Set up a presentation area and establish a procedure for each team to deliver their testimony.
7. Circulate to each team as practice occurs, offering feedback and praise.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Provide encouragement and advice for reluctant public speakers.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Allow multilingual students to give their portion of testimony in their native language, if desired.

Civic Competencies

- Civil discourse
- Collaboration
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Social awareness

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Tell students they will now have the chance to deliver their testimony to persuade the audience that their team's candy would be best to represent America.
2. Distribute and review Audience Observations, and review expectations that students will capture feedback while listening to their classmates' testimony.
3. Refer students to the "What makes a powerful speech?" anchor chart to provide students with suggestions of what kind of feedback they may offer.
4. Establish presentation order and begin presentations.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Teachers should model how to provide thoughtful, kind, and targeted feedback for the Audience Observations organizer.
- Allow talk-to-tech technology supports as needed.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider allowing students to utilize translation technology options to complete the organizer.
- Allow ML students to give their portion of testimony in their native language, if desired.

Civic Competencies

- Active listening
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Participating in a democratic experience
- Relationship skills
- Self-management

Lesson Plan: Day 2

Elaborate: Apply New Learning	Instructional Supports
1. Distribute the Feedback Collector, and explain expectations that each team will record feedback they receive from their classmates. 2. As audience members provide feedback, the presenters should capture it on their Feedback Collector. 3. Continue allowing each team to present and receive feedback.	**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** • Teachers should model how to complete the Feedback Collector organizer. • Allow talk-to-tech technology supports as needed. **Multilingual Learners (ML)** • Allow multilingual students to give feedback in their native language, if desired. **Civic Competencies** • Active listening • Giving and receiving feedback • Participating in a democratic experience • Relationship skills • Self-awareness • Self-management

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage	Instructional Supports
1. Congratulate students on completing their first simulated congressional hearing! 2. As an informal assessment of today's learning, allow students to review their Feedback Collector individually. 3. Encourage students to put a star or highlight the feedback they think is most useful. 4. Remind students to keep the Feedback Collector safe, as it will be needed for the next day's lesson.	**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** • Refer to the "What makes a powerful speech?" anchor chart to support the selection of the most useful feedback. **Multilingual Learners (ML)** • Allow multilingual students to translate peer feedback into their native language, if desired. **Civic Competencies** • Self-awareness • Self-management • Self-reflection

Lesson Plan: Day 3

Engage: Activate Prior Knowledge

1. Welcome students to class.
2. Instruct students to return to teams from the previous day based on the assigned candy.
3. Display scenarios one at a time and encourage students to give a thumbs-up/thumbs-down response to each:
    - A good way to express that your opinion differs from your teammate's is to start by saying, "I respectfully disagree with my colleague because ..."
    - If I want a chance to respond to the judges, I should just start talking.
    - Standing when the judges enter the room is a sign of respect.
    - Only one member of the team needs to read the testimony.
    - Our testimony should be solely based on opinion.
4. Facilitate a brief discussion to clarify misconceptions and correct false scenarios.
5. Share today's agenda with students, which includes these points:
    - Incorporating the feedback your team received from the audience into your testimonial.
    - Re-presenting the candy hearing testimonials to a partner team and getting additional feedback.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.
- Consider allowing students time to discuss the scenarios in small teams to encourage connection and conversation.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider providing scenarios in students' native language, as needed.
- Encourage students to offer additional scenarios for consideration and evaluation.

Civic Competencies

- Communication
- Relationship skills
- Self-awareness
- Self-management

Lesson Plan: Day 3

Explore: Guided/Open Inquiry

1. Instruct teams to take out testimonies and their completed Feedback Collector.
2. Allow teams to explore the feedback received and discuss ways for improving their work to include powerful speech strategies (criteria from Day 1), which may include the following:
    - Speaking with passion
    - Using additional examples
    - Citing facts and evidence
    - Employing repetition
    - Incorporating analogies

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.
- Encourage teammates to provide any additional observations on the testimony presentation.

Civic Competencies

- Communication
- Public speaking
- Relationship skills
- Self-awareness
- Self-management

Explain: Discuss and Share

1. Discuss steps teams might take to improve their testimony, such as the following:
    - Conducting additional research
    - Incorporating evidence into speech
    - Identifying areas to emphasize or places to pause
    - Seeking places to use analogies
2. Provide students with approximately fifteen minutes to revise and rehearse testimony.
3. Circulate to each team to provide coaching on potential improvements.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.

Civic Competencies

- Communication
- Goal setting
- Self-evaluation
- Social awareness

Lesson Plan: Day 3

Elaborate: Apply New Learning

1. Match up the class so that two teams will be paired together, taking turns delivering presentations and giving feedback.
2. Explain the following procedures:
    - Team A will present to team B.
    - Team B will serve as the "judges," who will listen to the prepared testimony and ask follow-up questions.
    - Team B will also be responsible for giving helpful feedback.
    - When team A is completely finished with the testimony, follow-up questions, and feedback, team B will present, and the pattern will be repeated, with team A serving as judges and providing feedback.
    - Allow time for each team to present at least one time.
3. Encourage teams to reflect on their newly received feedback.
4. Return to the full-class format and allot time for each team to deliver their testimony in order to persuade others why their candy should be the official candy.
5. Conduct a class vote as to which candy should be chosen as the official candy of the United States by a raising of hands or by ballot.
6. Be sure to have them base their opinions on how well the team met the criteria for powerful presentations.
7. Thank students for participating, and explain that this was a democratic experience voting simulation.
    - Make a point to emphasize this act of voting. Explain that everyone's opinions matter and we want everyone to have a voice in our classroom decisions. Furthermore, voting is a civic responsibility we are modeling now.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.
- Consider allowing students time to discuss the scenarios in small teams to encourage connection and conversation.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider providing scenarios in students' native language, as needed.
- Encourage students to offer additional scenarios for consideration and evaluation.

Civic Competencies

- Giving and receiving feedback
- Public speaking
- Relationship skills
- Self-evaluation

Extending Learning

- Encourage students to evaluate the criteria from the "What makes a powerful speech?" anchor chart. Students should consider the following:
    - Was this criterion clear enough?
    - Were they a good measure of powerful presentations?
    - How would they change or update them to meet their needs going forward?

Lesson Plan: Day 3

Evaluate: Assess and Authentically Engage

1. Congratulate the students on another day of successfully presenting testimony.
2. Revisit the compelling question: "Can a powerful speech be persuasive?" and encourage students to respond.
3. Use the full-class format to debrief the two days of simulations and facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
    - What did you learn about the simulated congressional hearings after the two days?
    - What improvements did you notice from Day 1 to Day 2?
    - What presentation skills could your team work on going forward?
    - What help can I offer you going forward as you prepare for your simulated congressional hearings?
4. Students will participate in self-reflection by completing the Democratic Experience Debrief.

Instructional Supports

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Be mindful of potential cultural differences, neurodiversity, and other factors that might influence expectations around speech and eye contact.
- Consider allowing students time to discuss the scenarios in small teams to encourage connection and conversation.
- Allow talk-to-tech technology supports as needed for the reflection tool.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

- Consider allowing students to utilize translation technology options to complete the reflection tool.

Civic Competencies

- Self-awareness
- Self-reflection
- Social awareness