Citizenship

Grades 6-8

Segment Summary:

With a push from his parents, Ben volunteered with Habitat for Humanity to help others less fortunate than himself. But somewhere along the way, Ben developed his own sense of citizenship and now feels a responsibility to give others a helping hand.

Ben's parents didn't give him much of a choice about volunteering with Habitat for Humanity. In fact, they say they even pushed him into it. They felt the experience was an integral part of teaching their son about citizenship and civic duty. While he wasn't thrilled with the idea of spending much of his free time helping others, Ben says he now loves volunteering and enjoys making new friends through the organization. He especially likes the feeling that comes from giving something back to his community. But a sense of citizenship is only one of the values Ben's parents hoped he would garner from his volunteering experience. The family also wanted their son to broaden his perspective by experiencing what it is like to be less fortunate in order to develop a sense of responsibility to help others who are in need. Working with Habit for Humanity has taught Ben that everyone has an obligation to contribute to his or her community. And thanks to his parents, he now knows firsthand what it means to be a productive citizen.

Discussion Questions:

1. What character traits can you identify in Ben?
2. What does it mean to be a good citizen?
3. How are obligation and citizenship related?
4. Ben says that at some point you need to start giving back to the community instead of just taking from it. In what way does this belief demonstrate citizenship?
5. How has Ben's experience changed his outlook on helping others?
6. What role did Ben's first experience play in his decision to continue helping others?
7. What role did Ben's parents play in his decision to become a volunteer?
8. Were his parents justified in pushing him into volunteering with Habitat for Humanity?
9. Ben mentioned a girl he met who could not believe she would have fun helping others. Why do we not consider helping others as "fun"?
10. What obligation do parents have to instill a sense of citizenship in their children?
11. What are some others ways in which parents can teach their children citizenship at home and in their neighborhood?
12. How do you demonstrate your citizenship at school, at home and in your community?

Bystander (n.)
Definition: someone who watches what is happening without taking part
Context: An innocent bystander was injured during the bank robbery.

Citizen (n.)
Definition: someone who lives in a particular town, country or state
Context: Melinda is acting as a good citizen when she volunteers to help children learn to read.

Citizenship (n.)
Definition: the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community
Context: Some people believe scouting groups help teach children positive ways to exhibit citizenship.

Civic duty (n.)
Definition: a sense or responsibility a person feels toward his or her own town or city
Context: As a citizen, it is your civic duty to cast a vote in the school board election.

Habitat for Humanity (n.)
Definition: an organization that helps poor people build and own their own homes
Context: By volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, Ben has learned a great deal about carpentry.

Intervene (v.)
Definition: to do something to try to stop an argument, war, etc., or to deal with a problem, especially one in which a person is not directly involved
Context: Does a bystander have an obligation to intervene when he or she witnesses an accident?

Mentor (n.)
Definition: an experienced person who advises, encourages and helps a less-experienced person
Context: Because of Fernando's experience with the Boys and Girls Clubs, he makes a wonderful mentor to younger volunteers.

Obligation (n.)
Definition: a moral or legal duty to perform a certain task
Context: Lindsey believes everyone has an obligation to protect the Earth's natural resources.

Productive (adj.)
Definition: effective in bringing about change; contributing to the overall success of something
Context: Gunther's efforts to prevent violence in his school make him a productive hall monitor.

Responsibility (n.)
Definition: a duty to help or serve a person or group
Context: One responsibility of citizenship is to speak up when something needs to be changed.

Trait (n.)
Definition: a particular quality in someone's character
Context: Dishonesty is not a trait you would want an employee to possess.

Volunteer (n.)
Definition: someone who does something without being paid, or who is willing to offer to help someone
Context: The Red Cross volunteers helped the flood victims recover from the water damage.

Source: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary.* Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. 2000.

Activity

Objectives:

Students will be able to
- Work with the class to produce criteria for citizen of the year applicants
- Demonstrate speaking and listening strategies during an interview and presentation
- Write a persuasive paper describing a candidate for the citizen of the year
- Evaluate peer presentations to determine the citizen of the year

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- Paper
- Chalkboard or overhead projector
- ***Citizen of the Year Evaluation Form***
- In a remote environment, meeting software will need to have "breakout room" or similar function enabled to allow pairs of students to have discussions. Also, handouts may need to be emailed to students ahead of time or shared in meeting software chat function

Procedure:

1. Compose a class list of traits and behaviors that a good citizen would possess. As you record the list on the board or overhead, have students record their own lists. *Note: This list can be created through an online discussion board.

   Examples:
   - Contributing to the community
   - Taking part in local, state and national politics
   - Helping others
   - Doing something because it's the right thing to do, not because the law requires you to do it

2. Have students imagine that they are responsible for creating the criteria on which they will base their decision for a school-wide citizen of the year. As students suggest criteria, write their ideas on the board or overhead.

3. Ask students to think about other students, faculty and staff members in their school who would meet these criteria. After a few minutes, suggest that students write the names of these candidates at the bottom of their lists under the heading "Candidates."

4. After students generate a list of prospective candidates, explain that each student will write a two- to three-minute speech in which he or she will persuade the rest of the class to vote for his or her candidate. The speech must include at least one general reason for the position and at least two specific examples to support the reason(s). Allow time for students to complete their speeches either in class or as a homework assignment. Suggest that students interview their candidates before writing their speeches.

5. Follow these directions for the evaluations:

   a. **Round One (Small Group Speeches) –** The teacher will divide the class into groups of four students. Each member in the group will receive a copy of the ***Citizen of the Year Evaluation Form***. While in small groups, each member will present his or her speech as the other members evaluate the speech and vote on the candidate presented. Students can only vote on candidates presented by other members. (They may not vote for their own candidates.) Students will vote by checking in the "Vote" box for the candidate of their choice. After all members give their speeches, the group should select the candidate with the most votes to represent the group.

Note: This round should only take approximately 15-20 minutes.

b. **Round Two (Whole Class Speeches) –** After groups choose their candidates, the class should come together to hear the speeches for the selected candidates. (In a class of 30 students, approximately eight or nine candidates will exist.) During Round Two, all students should listen and vote by secret ballot on the candidate they feel should be awarded citizen of the year.

Note: During Round Two, students are only voting on the narrowed field of candidates. They have already evaluated themselves during Round One.

6. To give this activity meaning, your class could hold an award ceremony in which the recipient of the award is honored by having the winning speech read aloud. Encouraging the recipient to invite his or her family members and even calling local newspapers and television stations would make the ceremony more meaningful and would involve the entire community.

Citizen of the Year Evaluation Form

Presenter's name: _____

Candidate's name: _____

Vote: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Criteria:	0	1	2	3	Total
			Ratings		
Main Idea and Supporting Details	Did not present speech	Had main idea, but no supporting details	Had main idea, but weak supporting details	Had clear main idea and strong supporting details	
Presentation		No eye contact and fidgety	Some eye contact, but visibly uncomfortable in front of the group	Good eye contact and visibly comfortable in front of the group	

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Presenter's name: _____

Candidate's name: _____

Vote: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Criteria:	0	1	2	3	Total
			Ratings		
Main Idea and Supporting Details	Did not present speech	Had main idea, but no supporting details	Had main idea, but weak supporting details	Had clear main idea and strong supporting details	
Presentation		No eye contact and fidgety	Some eye contact, but visibly uncomfortable in front of the group	Good eye contact and visibly comfortable in front of the group	

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Presenter's name: _____

Candidate's name: _____

Vote: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Criteria:	0	1	2	3	Total
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