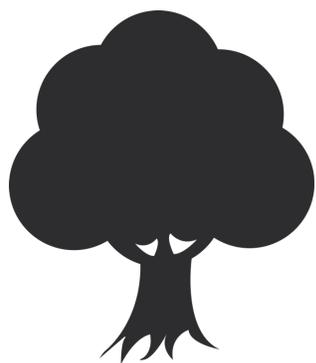




# G.R.A.D.E.

## Grassroots Action & Democracy Education



- Introducing grassroots action & participatory democracy to elementary school students
- Aligned to Common Core standards for grade 5

# WHAT IS G.R.A.D.E.?

## GRASSROOTS ACTION & DEMOCRACY EDUCATION

The **GrassRoots Action & Democracy Education (G.R.A.D.E.) Program** is an initiative introducing the principles of grassroots democratic action and participatory democracy to children in grades K - 12 with an initial focus on grade 5. The program consists of multi-week, student-led sessions where a facilitator provides students tools to learn about the history of grassroots and participatory democracy, identify an area where they feel a need to take action, plan a community campaign to address their action area and implement the campaign.

Each session takes place in a classroom - while **G.R.A.D.E.** provides a curriculum for learning about grassroots democracy and a template for organizing, each session focuses on a unique area determined by the students leading the sessions. The student-led democracy campaign will create at least one tangible resource for the community to engage with their work.





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***A NOTE FROM GRADE FOUNDER & LIBERTY TREE NATIONAL DIRECTOR, TIMEKA DREW:***

Last school year, I was invited to speak to my son's 5th grade class about what I do for my career. As I talked to the class about grassroots democracy and building people power by supporting community action, I was incredibly moved by the questions and comments I received. Not only did every single student in the class participate in the discussion, several of the students asked questions about their personal rights to organize and lead demonstrations whether it be in school or somewhere else in the community. They also had many questions about how they could interact with community members, like police officers, without fearing their personal safety and what they could do if they felt they were treated unfairly by an authority figure.

The students were excited to brainstorm different ways of addressing their concerns and creating democratic power as kids to help direct and protect their present and futures. This discussion led me to do some research, and I found that although there is strong evidence supporting the importance of democracy education for children in K-12 settings, there are no free, robust programs for building a true, hands-on understanding of community participation and grassroots democracy for youth of all ages. **In order to create a truly and deeply democratic society, we need a fully inclusive movement which engages youth organizers identifying the changes they would like to see in their communities.**

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These youth organizers and activists need the education and tools to work towards the system changes they are determined to see. By focusing on grassroots action, students can learn for themselves how local issues in their community are connected to issues happening at the city, state, national and international levels. By promoting and supporting self-guided democracy organizing, we help a vital contingent within the movement express their voices, utilize their talents and work together with the rest of the democracy movement in creative ways to realize the people-centered future a robust democracy promises.

In a time where demonstrations, protests, petitions, teach-ins, skill-shares and pro-democracy campaigns have become a necessity to not only resist the denial of rights of the Earth and targeted communities, but to build power, solidarity and alternative solutions within our localities, it is critical that the youth are being treated as actors within the struggle. Students and their families are affected by every aspect of what happens in our society, and as they learn about issues like the climate crisis as well as the realities of the deteriorating rights of targeted groups (including people of color, Muslims, Jews, immigrants, refugees, members of the LGBTQIA community, the poor and disabled, women, and more) they should simultaneously be learning about strategies and solutions to address them based in participatory democracy.

G.R.A.D.E. builds people power and a lasting understanding of community democracy and participation. It fosters leadership and supports civic engagement. G.R.A.D.E. is education-based action for today.

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# 10 WEEK OUTLINE

## WEEK 1: HISTORY

What is Grassroots Democracy?

How do we define “community” (from local to global)?

Review & analyze historic examples of participatory & grassroots democracy efforts.

Review & analyze current examples of participatory & grassroots democracy efforts.

\*SURVEY - What issues need to be addressed in the community?

## WEEK 2: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS & BASICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

What rights do students & others have to assemble, protest, petition, etc.? What is nonviolent action?

Historic examples? Current examples?

\*ART PROJECT - Find a way to creatively express what issue you think needs to be addressed in the community and why. (examples: poems, rap, dance, t-shirt design, meme) Prepare to vote on issue to determine campaign focus next week.

## WEEK 3: SYSTEM CHANGE

What are ways in which the system can be changed to better represent the will of the people?

Example #1: Money out of politics through an amendment to the Constitution

Example #2: Democratizing elections through ranked choice voting / Democratizing Elections through hand counted paper ballots

\*VOTE - Voting on proposed issues to select campaign focus (ranked choice).

## WEEK 4: CLIMATE & COMMUNITY

Analyzing how global & corporate actors affect communities large & small.

How does the issue affect people worldwide? How does the chosen local issue connect to the global community? What are the root causes of the chosen issue?

\*CAMPAIGN IDEAS + community engagement



# 10 WEEK OUTLINE

## **WEEK 5: PROTEST FOR PEACE**

Artful activism & nonviolent direct action.

How can creative action lead to change? What types of creative action would be most effective in your community?

\*VOTE - Voting on proposed campaign.

## **WEEK 6: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**

Why organizing gives people power. What is a union and how do the workers have strength in numbers? How have unions & other types of organizing changed the system? What is a solidarity economy and how does it serve the people?

\*CAMPAIGN PROMO IDEAS & PREPARATION

## **WEEK 7: CAMPAIGN PROMOTION & PREPARATION**

## **WEEK 8: CAMPAIGN IMPLEMENTATION**

## **WEEK 9: DEBRIEF**

## **WEEK 10: PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT ASSEMBLY**

Introduction & preparation for end of year event / Re-envisioning the Constitution / What would creating an amendment to the Constitution or drafting a new Constitution look like?





# 2018 CURRICULUM TEMPLATE

## Day One (with G.R.A.D.E. facilitator)

**\*Weekly Focus Question(s):** Question(s) meant to focus the conversation & help explore the overall themes for the day [readings that help engage the topic & relate to students currently participating in grassroots democracy efforts]

**\*Critical Thinking & Understanding the Reading:** Tools to assist students in analyzing text about democratic action [engage in collaborative discussions / choose a quote from one of the articles to help support what 2 or more main ideas of the text are / use details from both articles to give the best summary of the story & understanding of the related issue / present an opinion / write informative & explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas & information clearly]

**\*Definitions:** Break down topical words from the reading in order to understand meanings, root words and word families through context [analyze Greek & Latin roots & affixes as clues to word meaning / identify alternate word choices & clarify precise meaning of key words & phrases]

**\*Campaign Prep:** Activity related to democracy campaign discussed



# 2018 CURRICULUM TEMPLATE

## Day Two (with educator)

**\*Youth Take Action:** Review of stories or examples of youth (16 & under) taking grassroots or other democratic action in their communities [compare style of two different news articles covering the same story]

**\*Weekly Focus Journal:** Writing activity reflecting on concepts introduced earlier in the week [pose questions to either a) write a persuasive piece about the topic or text supporting a point of view with reasons and information from the week's text, b) write an informative, explanatory text to examine the topic and text for the week or c) write a narrative to develop real or imagined experiences or events using details and event sequence]

**\*Art in Action:** Art (draw / paint / collage / sculpt, etc.) inspired by the story of the week, youth taking action &/or the weekly focus question

**\*\*California Connection:** Explore related California history leading into action today / interact with California groups working to make democratic changes in their communities

(\*) = aligned to California's Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

(\*\*) = aligned to California History-Social Science Framework for grade 5