



Lesson 18.15 “How the NH Constitution Empowers Its Citizens”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will review the language in the N.H. Constitution, particularly Article 8, and what rights citizens are guaranteed
- Students will think critically about civic engagement and the actions citizens can take to participate in the government
- Students will learn about the different ways citizens are invited to participate in New Hampshire’s government

Lesson Competencies

- I can analyze, interpret, evaluate, and use information delivered orally or visually. (ELA 7)
- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
- I can describe how citizens can participate in the government. (Moose SS)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?
How have New Hampshire’s people shaped its government?

Focus Questions

How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?
What are people's rights and responsibilities?

Estimated Time

One 45-minute class session

Materials & Equipment

Unit 6: Learn It! "[N.H. State Constitution](#)," pages 7-9
Class set of “What Are We Allowed to Do?”
Text of Article 8 on the N.H. Government website (<https://www.nh.gov/glance/state-constitution/bill-rights>) or use [Marek Bennett's illustrated version of the article](#).
Class set of “Open, Accessible, Accountable, and Responsive”



Educator Introduction & Rationale

Once Americans declared their independence from Great Britain and began fighting the Revolutionary War, they had the monumental task of creating a new form of government, one that was run by the people, at the local, state, and federal levels. This new form of government needed to balance order and liberty. The people set about writing constitutions, documents that explain the social contract the people make with the government, saying what the government can and cannot do. The New Hampshire state constitution of 1784 was written primarily by John Pickering of Portsmouth. The 1784 state constitution begins with a single sentence that lays out the basis of its authority and its purpose: "All men are born equally free and independent; therefore, all government of right originates from the people, is founded in consent, and instituted for the general good." Then it was divided into two parts: a Bill of Rights and the Form of Government. The N.H. Bill of Rights explicitly listed 38 rights guaranteed to the people (which still generally meant only white men). In the years that followed, this list was modified and expanded to include 87 rights, to date.

This is the fourth lesson for middle school students in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. In this lesson, students explore the rights guaranteed specifically in Article 8 for the government to be "open, accessible, accountable, and responsive." The lesson opens with an activation inviting students to think about the ideas they have about what citizens can do to participate in the state government and what they think citizens should be able to do. The lesson then covers what it means for the government to be open, accessible, accountable, and responsive. Then, students examine actions citizens are able to take in the modern New Hampshire state government. Students are asked to sort these into the open, accessible, accountable, and responsive categories and articulate reasons why the ability to do these things is an important part of the functioning of our state government. The lesson closes with an extension activity for students to explore some of the ways the public is invited into the meetings and hearings that happen at the State House in Concord. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Before the Learning Activity

Student reading and comprehension questions

What does the NH Constitution say? Direct students to read Unit 6 Learn It! "[N.H. State Constitution](#)," pages 7-9, or review the information as a class.

After review, students should be able to identify the four major ideas in the preamble of the New Hampshire Constitution:

1. "All men are born equally free and independent"
2. "all government of right originates from the people"
3. "founded in consent"
4. "instituted for the general good"

and the two major parts:

1. A bill of rights
2. The form of government

Learning Activity

Activation

What is a citizen's role in the government? Distribute the t-chart and instruct students to work independently or in pairs/groups to fill it with ideas about what citizens are able to do to participate in our state government versus what they think citizens should be able to do.

Direct Instruction

What does Article 8 guarantee to citizens? Review with students that:

- The New Hampshire State Constitution guarantees that citizens will be able to access information about what happens in their government.
- This Article ensures that the government must be open, accessible, accountable, and responsive.
 - Open – the business of the government is a matter of public record; the State House is a public building.
 - Accessible – citizens are able to access information about their elected officials including what committees and working groups they are apart of and how to contact them.
 - Accountable – citizens can choose to reelect an official that represents them, or not, depending on if they approve of what the official has or has not done during their term.
 - Responsive – citizens should be able to communicate with their elected representatives and expect a timely response.
- Review the text of the article on the N.H. Government website (<https://www.nh.gov/glance/state-constitution/bill-rights>) or use [Marek Bennett's illustrated version of the article](#). Review unfamiliar words as necessary.

Guided Practice



Open, Accessible, Accountable, and Responsive Using the worksheet, invite students to go through the expectations NH citizens have of their government and ask students to consider which category of article 8 the expectation represents. Finally, ask students to articulate why they think it's important for NH citizens to hold the government to these expectations.

If students completed the Activation, this is an opportunity to refer to those initial ideas to see how their expectations and their desires match up with what they learned. Students can also sort their ideas into the categories of open, accountable, accessible, and responsive.

Tell students these are all true facets of our government – and something that is protected by the Constitution.

Extension

What's going on in Concord this week? Visit the New Hampshire House of Representatives' Meeting Schedule on their website (<https://gc.nh.gov/house/schedule/dailyschedule.aspx>) and review what meetings, hearings, and sessions will be going on in the next few days. Depending on availability and interest, you may also choose to watch part of a hearing or executive session on the NH House of Representatives Committee Streaming YouTube page (<https://www.youtube.com/c/NHHouseofRepresentativesCommitteeStreaming>). (Note: Previous recordings are also available)

Consider using a Moose on the Loose graphic organizer template for students to fill out ahead of time or during the livestream to organize the information about the topic being discussed. Particularly, a 5Ws chart might be most helpful in breaking down these large issues.

Students can also draft a letter for the class to send to any of the representatives present in the meeting offering their opinion and viewpoint on the issue.

Supporting Materials

Other Resources

- N.H. Constitution, www.nh.gov/glance/constitution.htm
- Douglas, Leonard & Garvey, PC. How Do You Amend the New Hampshire Constitution?
www.nhlawoffice.com/ourblogs/2018/november/how-do-you-amend-the-new-hampshireconstitution-/
- House of Representatives Meeting Schedule:
<https://gc.nh.gov/house/schedule/dailyschedule.aspx>

Standards

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: Structure and Function of United States and New Hampshire Government (SS:CV:8:2.1)
- ✓ Civics and Governments: Rights and Responsibilities (SS:CV:8:4.1)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.1.6-8, D2.Civ.2.6-8, D2.Civ.3.6-8, D2.Civ.5.6-8)
- ✓ Participation and Deliberation (D2.Civ.10.6-8)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details (RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure (RH.6-8.4)



Lesson Vocabulary

accessible	(adjective) capable of being understood or appreciated
accountable	(adjective) liable to be held to an account, answerable, responsible
amend	(verb) To revise or change
amendment	(noun) An addition to an existing document; in the U.S. Constitution, the amendments come after the original document
bill of rights	(noun) A document that contains a list of freedoms to protect; in the N.H. Constitution, the Bill of Rights is the first section
constitution	(noun) A document laying out the rules for how a government will work
infringe	(verb) To actively break a law or agreement
open	(adjective) exposed to general view or knowledge
representative democracy	(noun) When a group of people select someone to communicate their views and make laws for them
responsive	(adjective) quick to respond or react appropriately or sympathetically, answering
rights	(noun) Things a person should legally or morally be able to do or get to have
social contract	(noun) An agreement between people and their government to give up some rights in exchange for security and law and order