

JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 2: CHAPTER 1 – TAKING CIVIC ACTION LESSON 4: CHOOSING AN ISSUE TO WORK ON AS A GROUP

LESSON 4: CHOOSING AN ISSUE TO WORK ON AS A GROUP (1 hr)

Goals

For students to:

- explore their own values in light of Jewish values and the values of the group.
- identify issues they are concerned with.
- choose an issue to work on.

For the group to:

- arrive at a consensus around an issue or project that will be meaningful to everyone

Materials

- sticker dots or small post-it notes
- “If you could use your time...” sheets. Cut into individual strips.
- Blackboard/Poster paper

Questions for the group to think about:

- What values do group members care about most?
- What issues or problems does the group care about the most?
- What is the arena we care most about affecting – local or national? Jewish, American, Israel, or world?
- What do people who are involved or knowledgeable think is the most important need in the community we want to work with?
- What issue or problem matters most intensely to us, flows from a collective core value, and is real in the arena we have chosen for our action?

1) Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Have students stand and designate two axes of the room for them to answer the following questions. If a student feels very strongly about one answer, they should go all the way to the corner, if they are less sure, they can position themselves somewhere in between.

Emphasize that for this part of the exercise, there will be no discussion. They should talk only with their feet!

Read the statement:

“I would be more likely to volunteer or give money for projects that...”

JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 2: CHAPTER 1 – TAKING CIVIC ACTION LESSON 4: CHOOSING AN ISSUE TO WORK ON AS A GROUP

(and then have participants move to the right or to the left depending on their responses – point into the appropriate corner as you reach each response.)

Statement	LEFT	RIGHT
1	serve Jews	serve anyone
2	give food or meals	lobby to raise the minimum wage
3	help Jews in your city	help Jews in Israel
4	provide food, shelter, or medical care	support education and culture
5	help Americans	help people in the poorest countries around the globe

After each question, the facilitator can ask people at the far left, far right, and in the middle why they positioned themselves in a particular place. Ask students only to provide quick personal responses at this point, rather than give and take.

2) Activity #1: Identifying the Group’s Values (15 minutes)

Print the Jewish values list and post on the blackboard – leave 1-2 feet between each sheet. Give each student 5 dots/post-it notes and ask them to put a dot by those values that are most important to them personally. You may want to allow people to put more than one “vote” by a particular value so they can express how intensely they hold a particular value. (10 minutes)
After all the marks have been made, take some time to observe as a group where there are widely shared values. There may be some conversation about values that seem similar – sometimes people have a hard time distinguishing one label from another – and the facilitator should make note where the group perceives a connection, draw some connecting lines. It’s not important or useful at this point to cross any values off the list. (5 minutes)

3) Activity #3: Issue Focus (15 mins)

Distribute the “If you could give…” sheets and give students a few minutes to write individually in response to the question. (3 minutes)

Ask people to share their responses. As they speak list the problems and issues on poster paper. Make note of overlapping interests. If there seem to be connections between ideas, draw lines. (7 minutes)

Start the discussion by highlighting a smaller number of issues that seem to interest larger clusters of group members. You could repeat the “dot” exercise to indicate preferences for issues.

Just

Judaism Action Social Change

JCI CURRICULUM: UNIT 2: CHAPTER 1 – TAKING CIVIC ACTION LESSON 4: CHOOSING AN ISSUE TO WORK ON AS A GROUP

Where there are specific issues that link to broader issues, make note of those connections.

At the same time, after broad issues (“hunger”, “health care”) are on the table, focus the group on articulating particular problems they would like to address (e.g. “ensuring access to health care in our city”).

If there is a point at which discussion is stuck, refer back to the list of shared values. Ask, “Which of these issues are connected to the values we care about the most?”

When the group comes to a consensus, make sure to articulate or to ask the group to articulate how the chosen issue relates back to the values of the group.