Objectives
Students will:
- Discuss the importance and influence of their opinions.
- Identify a healthy eating or physical activity issue in their school or community.
- Learn to structure a project to make a positive change in their community.

Time Needed
50 minutes plus follow-up classes for students to complete their projects

Getting Ready
Make:
- Tools for Creating Change transparency

Duplicate:
- Tools for Creating Change
- Project Proposal

Curriculum Links
- Social Studies
- History
- Language Arts
- Health
- Consumer Education

OVERVIEW OF LESSON—To become involved citizens, students must learn a broad range of skills, such as public speaking, letter writing, research, and critical thinking. This lesson helps students explore the importance and impact of their opinions. It gives students the opportunity to identify a community project they would like to work on, and optional extension activities help students complete their projects.

Activity Steps
Teacher’s Note: The primary activity of this lesson is to have students plan a project that affects healthy eating or physical activity choices in their school or community. The suggestions in Extensions will help students complete their projects.

1. Discuss with students the influence their opinions have on society. Cite examples of how adolescents influence the world around them (e.g., they influence clothing trends, music, food). Do students feel they have the power to make changes in their school or community?

2. Explain that individuals can’t create change unless they know exactly what they want. The first step is to have a vision. Ask students to envision a healthy school or community. What changes would they make to improve their healthy eating and/or physical activity choices. Which idea might benefit the most people? Ask for a student volunteer to record the list of ideas on the chalkboard. (For background information on healthy eating and physical activity, see Lessons 1 and 2.)

Examples of ways to improve healthy eating or physical activity choices include, but are not limited to, holding a healthy food drive to support a local food bank; starting a community garden and donating the fruits and vegetables to the needy; adding more fresh fruits and vegetables, healthier snacks, or a salad bar at school; surveying students about the types of physical activities they would like in physical education and then asking the physical education director whether some of those activities that are currently not offered can be offered; helping select
foods and beverages to offer in the school vending machines or student store that are healthy and that students will buy.

3. Discuss the concept of policy. Define policy as a set of principles or course of activities pursued by a government, organization, or individual. An example of a school policy is to have a closed campus during lunch. Whether written or unwritten, policies help ensure that a plan remains in effect. Discuss the types of policymakers who write and enforce school policies, such as the principal, school board, etc.

4. Ask students to pick a project listed on the board they would like to work on in a group. Assign students to groups based on the issues they want to work on. The group’s task is to identify their vision, the policy they want to change, and the tools they can use to make the change. Discuss Tools for Creating Change using the transparency and handout. Distribute Project Proposal, which will help students outline preliminary project steps.

**Extensions**

The following first four activities will help students complete their projects:

- **Optional Activity for Group Project:** Use California Project LEAN’s Playing the Policy Game toolkit to help you develop an action plan for getting healthier foods or more physical activity opportunities for students on your campus or in your community. Playing the Policy Game can help you identify what you would like to change, how to change it, and who can help you. A copy of this tool can be found at www.Californiaprojectlean.org.

- **Optional Activity for Group Project:** At the completion of the project, ask students to write a summary of their experience. Encourage a professional presentation so students have a valuable writing sample to supplement their portfolio. Distribute Project Review to give them helpful guidelines.

- **Optional Activity for Group Project:** Ask students to evaluate the dynamics within their groups. Occasionally, the workload in a group project may be unevenly distributed and the evaluation allows students to address their efforts and the efforts of the rest of the group. Peer evaluations can be extremely valuable in instilling a sense of professionalism and responsibility in the students. Distribute Was It a Team Effort? Have students share their evaluations with their group members.

- **Optional Activity for Group Project:** Ask students to write a business letter to the school board, principal, etc., detailing their group’s ideas. Distribute Sample Business Letter for a suggested format.

- **Homework:** Ask students to report on a historical figure who made a difference. Sample figures may include Mother Teresa, Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, Sinclair Lewis, etc. Students should identify the historical figure’s vision, the policy the historical personage worked to change, and the tools he/she used to create change.

- **Optional Outreach Activity:** Request permission from the school principal or school board to plant a garden on or near the school grounds. Donate the fruits and vegetables to a needy family or shelter.

- **Optional Activity:** Invite a local community activist to class to speak about his/her vision; the policy he/she wants to change; and the tools he/she is using to pursue that change.

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Tools for Creating Change

- Identify what you want to change. (Explain your vision.)
- Write a new policy.
- Hand out information in written form, such as booklets, brochures, etc.
- Do an opinion poll or survey about the issue you want to change.
- Make posters, billboards, or murals to promote your vision.
- Talk with someone about your ideas for change.
- Write a petition and ask people to sign it.
- Write a letter to policymakers.
- Give a speech to a group of policymakers.
- Hold a press conference or special event to let people know about your project.
- Use the media. Talk to school or community newspapers, radio, and/or television stations.
- Create a website or a link on your school website that describes the change you’d like to make.
1. What is your vision? Why should your school or community have more healthy food and/or physical activity choices?

2. List one change your group wants to work on.

3. How can you get started? Remember to use the Tools for Creating Change handout.

4. What would you like to learn from this project?
To help you write your project summary, answer these questions:

1. Describe your project. What change did you work on? What tools did you use and what steps did you take?

2. Did your project help anyone? If so, how? If not, why not?

3. How did the project help you? What new skills did you learn?

4. Did everyone in the group work as a team? Explain.

Use your answers to write your paper.
Your Name: __________________________

This is a time to think honestly about your group project. Did everyone in the group work as a team? This grid will help you decide. Give yourself and your team members a score of 0 to 2.

**SCORING**

0 = This student did nothing in this area.
1 = This student helped a little in this area.
2 = This student was very helpful in this area.

*Add up each student’s score and write the TOTAL SCORE in the last column.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT NAME</th>
<th>ATTENDED MEETINGS/ACTIVITIES</th>
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<th>FINISHED JOBS</th>
<th>WORKED WELL IN THE TEAM</th>
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Your Name
Your School or Group Name
Your Address
Your City, State ZIP Code

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Date

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Name of Company
Company Address
Company City, State ZIP Code

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Salutation (e.g., Dear Name of Person You are Writing): [colon]

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Open your letter by introducing yourself—your name, age, and what school you attend. Explain why you are writing to that person. You may even wish to start a sentence with, “I am writing to you because I feel/want…”

[Skip 2 Spaces]

In the next paragraph, explain why you think this issue is a problem or why you feel it necessary to bring concerns to the company’s attention. Use facts, statistics, and/or share a personal experience to support your concern. Try and keep your letter short. It should not be more than one page.

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Close your letter by encouraging a reply (e.g., “I am looking forward to your reply”). Remember to be polite and courteous, and thank the person/company for his/her time.

[Skip 2 Spaces]

Closing (e.g., Sincerely, Yours truly), [comma]

[Skip 4 Spaces & Sign Your Name Here]

Type Your Name

Enc. [This abbreviation followed by the number of additional pieces of paper enclosed with your letter (e.g., Enc. 2.)]