OUR SHARED STORY:
LATINE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING IN INDIANAPOLIS

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS

Intermediary Grades Lesson Plan



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Latine Civic Participation in Indianapolis

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Introduction

This inquiry-based lesson is designed for an intermediary-level civics classroom and supports Indiana Civics standards through the investigation of local civic organizations. Using an inquiry approach, students examine how ordinary citizens identify community needs, work collaboratively, advocate for change, and contribute to the common good.

The lesson centers the experiences of Latine civic organizations in Indianapolis to demonstrate how community members have worked together to address local challenges and strengthen their communities. Although organizations such as La Plaza, the Indiana Latine Institute, El Centro Hispano, and others have played significant roles in shaping Indianapolis through education, economic development, cultural preservation, advocacy, and community services, their contributions are often overlooked in traditional civics instruction. By examining these organizations as case studies in civic engagement, students develop a deeper understanding of how individuals and community groups participate in civic life and create meaningful change.

Indiana Academic Standards

**Based on the 2023 Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies*

Indiana Social Studies:

6.CIV.13 Explain the role citizens have in making decisions and rules within the community, state, and nation.

6.CIV.14 Examine ways by which citizens may effectively voice opinions, monitor government, and bring about change in government (e.g., voting, participating in the election process, writing a petition, contacting legislators, attending a local government meeting).

6.CIV.15 Use a variety of informational resources to identify and evaluate contemporary issues that involve civic responsibility, individual rights, and the common good.

Latine Civic Participation in Indianapolis

Lesson Overview

Estimated Time:	Materials:
60 Minutes	Pencil/pen, sticky notes, Chromebook/tablet

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can ordinary people create change in their communities?

Throughout the lesson, students investigate the essential question: **How can ordinary people create change in their communities?**

Staging the essential question: As students enter the classroom, display the prompt: *If you could change ONE thing about your community, what would it be?* Give them one sticky note each to share their ideas.

Students begin by reflecting on issues they would like to improve within their own communities before investigating six Latine civic organizations featured in the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Through a jigsaw investigation, students analyze why each

organization was established, the community needs it sought to address, the strategies it employed, and the impact it had on Indianapolis. Students then extend their investigation by researching how these organizations continue to address community issues today, allowing them to examine how civic action evolves as communities and their needs change over time.

As the lesson's performance task, students develop a Community Action Plan inspired by the organizations they investigated. Returning to a community issue they identified at the beginning of the lesson, students propose a realistic plan for creating positive change by identifying the issue, explaining why it matters, considering who they would collaborate with, and outlining an achievable first step. Throughout the activity, students draw upon lessons learned from Indianapolis's Latine civic organizations to inform their own thinking about civic participation and community leadership.

The lesson concludes by asking students to reflect on how the examples of Latine civic organizations can inspire their own roles as active and engaged citizens. Students recognize that meaningful change often begins when ordinary people identify a community need, work collaboratively, advocate for solutions, and remain committed to improving the common good. By connecting local examples of civic engagement to students' own communities, the lesson encourages young people to see themselves as capable participants in shaping the future of their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Lesson Sequence

Step 1—Launch the Inquiry (10 minutes)

As students enter, display the prompt: *If you could change ONE thing about your community, what would it be?* Give them one sticky note each.

Examples might include: More parks, cleaner neighborhoods, better sidewalks, more cultural festivals, more recycling, safer intersections, more bike paths, etc.

Invite students to post their sticky notes on the board and take a few minutes to read one another's responses. Facilitate a whole-class discussion using the following questions:

- Which of these issues could one person solve alone?
- How might these problems actually be solved?

Guide students toward recognizing that meaningful community change often requires people to work together through collaboration, organization, advocacy, and civic participation. Students may suggest ideas such as organizing community members, contacting local leaders, starting clubs or organizations, writing letters or petitions, raising awareness, or volunteering.

Ask students: *What do you notice about many of the solutions we discussed?*

Help students recognize that most community problems require **collective action** rather than individual effort.

Introduce the lesson's essential question: **How can ordinary people create change in their communities?**

Explain that today students will investigate how Latine community organizations in Indianapolis identified community needs, worked together to address challenges, and created positive change for their communities.

Step 2—Jigsaw Source Investigation (30 minutes)

Explain that civic organizations are one way that ordinary citizens work together to improve their communities. Today, students will investigate several Latine organizations in Indianapolis to understand how citizens identified community needs and advocated for change.

Divide students into **Home Groups** of six. Assign each student to an **Expert Group**, where they will investigate one *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis* entry.

Within their Expert Groups, distribute the **Civic Organization Profile** handout. Students will analyze their assigned organization by identifying:

- Organization name and mission
- Community problem that led to its creation
- Who founded or organized the effort
- Strategies or actions the organization used
- Individuals or communities who benefited
- Evidence of the organization's impact
- One lesson the organization teaches about citizenship

Next, students will investigate how their organization continues to create change today. Using the organization's website, current programs, annual reports, news articles, or social media, students will answer the following questions:

- What issues does this organization address today?
- Have community needs changed over time?
- What advocacy or community action is happening now?
- How has the organization changed or stayed the same over time?

After completing their investigation, students return to their Home Groups and teach their classmates about their assigned organization. As students share, encourage them to identify patterns across the organizations.

Facilitate a brief whole-class discussion by creating a class chart that identifies common themes. Ask students:

- What similarities did you notice across the organizations?
- What strategies did multiple organizations use?
- What do these organizations teach us about how ordinary people create change?

Encourage students to recognize that although each organization addressed different community needs, they all demonstrate how citizens can work together to strengthen their communities.

Sources:

Source A: "NOPAL Cultural," Nicole Martinez-LeGrand, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/nopal-cultural/

Source B: "Latino Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence," Edwin Arellano, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/latino-coalition-against-domestic-and-sexual-violence/

Source C: "La Plaza, Inc.," Miriam Acevedo and Nicole Martinez-LeGrand, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/la-plaza-inc/

Source D: "Indianapolis Hispanic Chamber of Commerce," Elizabeth J. Van Allen, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/indianapolis-hispanic-chamber-of-commerce/

Source E: "Indiana Latino Institute" Marlene Dotson, Emily Price, and Armand Sezura, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/indiana-latino-institute-inc/

Source F: "El Centro Hispano/The Hispanic Center," Hispanic Indianapolis Oral History Project and Elizabeth J. Van Allen, *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, https://indyencyclopedia.org/el-centro-hispano-the-hispanic-center/

Step 3—Performance Task: Community Action Plan (10 minutes)

Return to the lesson's essential question: **How do ordinary people create change in their communities?**

Ask students to revisit the community issue they identified during the opening activity. Group students according to similar issues whenever possible. Some students may work independently depending on the topic they selected.

Distribute the **Community Action Plan** handout. Drawing inspiration from the Latine organizations they investigated, students will develop an action plan for addressing their chosen issue. Students should respond to the following questions:

- What is the issue?
- Why does it matter?
- Who is affected?
- What could ordinary people do to help address this issue?
- Who would you need to work with to create change?
- Which organization you investigated inspired your thinking? Explain how.
- What is one realistic first step your group could take?

Encourage students to conduct additional research about their selected community issue, if time permits, to strengthen their proposed action plan.

Step 4—Concluding Discussion (10 minutes)

Invite student groups to briefly present their Community Action Plans to the class. Encourage classmates to ask questions, offer suggestions, and identify similarities among the different plans.

Conclude the lesson by revisiting the essential question: **How can ordinary people create change in their communities?**

Guide students to recognize that meaningful change often begins when citizens identify a community need, work collaboratively, advocate for solutions, and remain engaged over time. Close by emphasizing that the Latine organizations they investigated demonstrate that ordinary people have long played an important role in strengthening Indianapolis through civic participation and community leadership. Encourage students to consider how they, too, can contribute to the common good within their own schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

NAME _____ PERIOD _____ DATE _____

Civic Organization Profile

Essential Question: *How can ordinary people create change in their communities?*

Part A: Investigating Civic Action

Directions: Your group has been assigned one Latine civic organization from the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. First, use the encyclopedia entry to learn why the organization was created and how it worked to improve the community. Then, conduct additional research to investigate how the organization continues to serve the community today.

Organization	
Mission	
Community problem(s) that led to its creation	
Who founded or organized the effort	
Strategies or actions the organization used	

Individuals or communities who benefited	
Evidence of the organization's impact	
What issues is this organization addressing today?	
How have community needs changed over time?	
What advocacy or community action is happening now?	
How has the organization changed or stayed the same over time?	
What does this organization teach us about how ordinary people can create change?	

Part B: Civic Action Plan

Directions: Drawing inspiration from the Latine organizations you investigated, you will develop an action plan for addressing your chosen issue. Think through your proposed issue and the social actions you could take. You are *encouraged* to conduct additional research about your selected community issue, if time permits, to strengthen your proposed action plan. You will share your thinking with the class.

What is the issue?	
Why does it matter?	
Who is affected?	
What civic actions could ordinary people take to help address the issue?	
Who would you need to partner with to create change?	
Which organization that you investigated inspired your action plan? Explain what you learned from its example.	
What is one realistic first step you/your group could take?	

Further Resources

Encyclopedia of Indianapolis

NOPAL Cultural
https://indyencyclopedia.org/nopal-cultural/

Latino Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
https://indyencyclopedia.org/latino-coalition-against-domestic-and-sexual-violence/

La Plaza, Inc.
https://indyencyclopedia.org/la-plaza-inc/

Indianapolis Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
https://indyencyclopedia.org/indianapolis-hispanic-chamber-of-commerce/

Indiana Latino Institute
https://indyencyclopedia.org/indiana-latino-institute-inc/

El Centro Hispano/The Hispanic Center
https://indyencyclopedia.org/el-centro-hispano-the-hispanic-center/

Tracing a Hidden Presence: The Story of Mexican and Mexican American Indianapolis, 1850–2020
https://indyencyclopedia.org/features/mexicancommunity/

Other

Hoosier Latino Resources

https://indianahistory.org/hoosier-latino-resources/

Expanding Our Story: Exploring Indianapolis Hispanic and Latino History

https://indypl.bibliocommons.com/v2/list/display/1304039738/2903807497

NOTES