Crossing the Divide

How public decisions change when people listen and weigh competing needs

E.P.1.1.A "Evaluate the impact of perspectives, civil discourse, and democratic principles on addressing civic issues."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. Underline two different perspectives, circle one example of civil discourse, and number two ways the council makes its decision open to the public.

A Safer Way Across

1 At dismissal, students crowd the corner of Pine Street and Third Avenue. The nearest marked crosswalk is two blocks away, so some students cross where drivers do not expect them. The city council is considering a new crosswalk and a traffic signal at the corner. Students say a shorter crossing would make their walk safer. A resident who uses a wheelchair points out that a painted crosswalk alone would not solve the problem: the corner also needs curb ramps. Nearby shop owners worry that a signal could slow deliveries and remove a loading space.

2 At a public meeting, the council asks speakers to describe what they have seen and to question proposals rather than attack people. A student shares a count of pedestrians crossing at dismissal. A shop owner describes delivery times, and the resident explains how a missing curb ramp blocks a safe route. When one speaker claims that shop owners care more about profits than safety, the chair asks the group to focus on the loading concern instead. This rule does not make the interests identical, but it helps the council compare evidence and consider changes that address more than one need.

3 The council posts a draft plan and allows written comments from people who cannot attend the evening meeting. Its revised plan puts a signal and curb ramps at the corner while moving the loading space to the next block. Council members vote in a public meeting to fund a six-month trial, then review crossing counts and delivery delays before deciding whether to keep it. Public comments and an open vote make the decision easier to inspect, while the trial tests its effects. Still, moving the loading space may create problems for some workers, so their concerns remain important during the review.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the resident's perspective change what the council must consider in a complete safety plan?

2. How does the chair's response to the accusation help the council address the issue?

3. How do written comments and a public vote each affect the council's decision?

4. What could the trial reveal, and why should the council still hear from workers during its review?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your town is considering closing its public pool earlier to save money. In one paragraph, describe two affected groups with different perspectives, then propose one civil-discourse step and one democratic decision-making step and explain how each could improve the decision.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. Underline two different perspectives, circle one example of civil discourse, and number two ways the council makes its decision open to the public. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the resident's perspective change what the council must consider in a complete safety plan?	**The resident shows that a painted crosswalk is not enough for someone using a wheelchair. The plan must also include curb ramps.**
2	How does the chair's response to the accusation help the council address the issue?	**It shifts attention from an attack on shop owners to their loading concern, allowing the council to compare that concern with safety evidence.**
3	How do written comments and a public vote each affect the council's decision?	**Written comments let people who cannot attend the meeting contribute. A public vote lets people see how council members decide.**
4	What could the trial reveal, and why should the council still hear from workers during its review?	**Crossing counts and delivery delays could show whether the plan improves safety while affecting deliveries. Workers may also identify problems caused by moving the loading space.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Families who work late may want the pool to stay open, while taxpayers may favor shorter hours to reduce costs. At a meeting, each group could explain its concerns without accusing the other of selfishness. That would help officials compare needs instead of judging motives. The town could also publish the pool's costs and invite written comments before an open council vote. Those steps would let more residents participate and show the public what information shaped the decision.

Accept responses that explain how a perspective, a respectful exchange, or a public process affects the quality or fairness of a decision. For the open task, students may identify other plausible groups if their perspectives differ and both proposed steps have a clear purpose.