Who Gets Heard?

Weigh perspectives and public process in a local decision

WG.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 As you read, underline three different concerns, circle two ways people keep the discussion civil, and number two steps that make the decision open to the public. Use your marks to judge how the town addresses the issue.

A Crossing for Cedar Glen

1 At a public meeting in the fictional town of Cedar Glen, residents debated whether to add a marked crosswalk near a busy bus stop. Students described a long walk to the nearest crossing, especially difficult for people using wheelchairs. A shop owner worried that removing two parking spaces would hurt customers. A bus driver said a crossing directly beside the stop might draw people across in front of buses. All three wanted safer trips, but each noticed a different cost or risk. If officials heard only the loudest group, they could mistake one viewpoint for the whole community.

2 The council invited written comments and gave each speaker the same two minutes. Residents could question claims, but the chair stopped personal attacks. When one speaker called the shop owner selfish, a student restated the owner's concern about parking before explaining why a safer route mattered more to her. The driver suggested placing the crossing farther from the stop, where approaching drivers could see people better. That change might preserve visibility, but it could lengthen the route for some riders. Civil discussion did not erase conflict; it helped the group compare possible effects rather than judge people's motives.

3 Council members then asked the transportation department to study sight lines, accessibility, parking use, and costs at two possible locations. They promised to publish the findings before a public vote. A majority vote would give the council authority to choose, but voting alone would not show whether the plan treated riders with disabilities fairly. Members agreed to compare the options using safety and access as well as cost, then explain their decision in public. Residents would still disagree about which tradeoffs were acceptable. The process gave more people a chance to influence the choice and a way to hold officials accountable afterward.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How might the decision suffer if council members listen only to students? Use two other perspectives from the passage.

2. The driver suggests moving the crossing farther from the stop. Evaluate one possible benefit and one possible drawback of that change.

3. How did the student's response to the shop owner improve the discussion, even though they disagreed?

4. Why would a majority vote alone be insufficient to judge whether the crosswalk decision is fair? Name one other step the council plans to take.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your town is deciding whether to extend public library hours on Sundays with a limited budget. In four or five sentences, propose a fair way to decide that includes two perspectives, one civil discussion practice, one democratic principle, and a tradeoff to weigh.

ANSWER KEY

Who Gets Heard?

HIGH SCHOOL · WG.P.1.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline three different concerns, circle two ways people keep the discussion civil, and number two steps that make the decision open to the public. Use your marks to judge how the town addresses the issue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How might the decision suffer if council members listen only to students? Use two other perspectives from the passage.	**The council might overlook the shop owner's concern about lost parking and the bus driver's warning that a crossing beside the stop could draw people in front of buses.**
2	The driver suggests moving the crossing farther from the stop. Evaluate one possible benefit and one possible drawback of that change.	**Approaching drivers might see people better, but some riders would have a longer route to the crossing.**
3	How did the student's response to the shop owner improve the discussion, even though they disagreed?	**By restating the parking concern before arguing for a safer route, the student helped the group compare effects instead of judging the shop owner's motives.**
4	Why would a majority vote alone be insufficient to judge whether the crosswalk decision is fair? Name one other step the council plans to take.	**A majority vote would not show whether the plan treats riders with disabilities fairly. The council plans to study accessibility and explain its decision in public.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Families may want Sunday hours for students who cannot visit on weekdays, while library staff may worry about added shifts. I would give both groups equal speaking time and ask speakers to address ideas rather than insult people. The council should publish staffing costs and invite public comments before voting. It should weigh the benefit of greater access against the cost of Sunday staffing. Even if a majority favors longer hours, officials should explain how the final plan treats staff fairly.

Accept other passage-supported evaluations of the crosswalk options and decision process. For the open task, look for two distinct perspectives, a specific civil discussion practice, a democratic principle, and a clearly explained tradeoff.