



## Universal PreK (UPK) Café Special Issue - October 25, 2024

With the presidential election upon us, this UPK Café special issue will discuss developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) and implementation of citizenship skills. For this special issue the following resources are referenced, Education for a Civil Society: Teaching Young Children to Gain the Five Democratic Life Skills (Gartrell, 2023) based upon the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)-Social Studies that align with [National Council on the Social Studies](#) (NCSS) and NCSS's [College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\)](#) Framework.

### Preamble

The Preamble states, We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union. As educators how do we develop and foster citizenship skills “to form a more perfect Union” within our classrooms? The **Five Democratic Life Skills (DLS)** (Gartrell, 2023) promotes the following skills: belonging, acceptance, perspective taking, conflict resolution, advocacy, executive functioning (self-regulation) and group building skills. Utilizing the five DLS and the VELs, educators can support and implement developmentally appropriate citizenship skills within their classrooms.

### Five Democratic Life Skills (DLS)

**DLS 1** Finding acceptance as a member of a group and as a worthy individual.

- Belonging and inclusion

**DLS 2** Expressing strong emotions in non-hurting ways.

- Executive function and self-regulation

**DLS 3** Solving problems creatively-independently and in cooperation with others.

- Conflict resolution and problem solving independently and in a group setting

**DLS 4** Accepting differing human qualities in others.

- Describe differences/similarities in others. Cultural differences/similarities always try to find the commonalities

**DLS 5** Thinking intelligently and ethically.

- Kindness, fairness, advocating, pre-leadership skills, and group skills.



## VELS and DLS in Practice

The table below demonstrates how each of the DLS skills aligns with several VELS domains and developmental skills for PreK-Grade 3.

DLS	VELS	PreK/K/Grade 1 Skills	Grades 2 and 3 Skills
<b>DSL 1</b> Belonging and inclusion	<b>VELS Social Studies;</b> Element 2. Family and Community, Civics, Government, and Society	Basic citizenship skills such as rule making and compliance, and how these change in different settings (school, home, community).	Expand on children’s understanding of the concept of community to include global communities in other countries by acknowledging different perspectives (understanding another person’s feelings or position).
<b>DSL 2</b> Executive function and self-regulation	<b>VELS Developing Self:</b> Element 1. Emotion and Self-Regulation	Building upon executive functioning skills (self-regulation) is important for being able to be a good “citizen” when working in groups.	Maintain citizenship skills.
<b>DSL 3</b> Conflict resolution and problem solving independently and in a group setting	<b>VELS Developing Self</b> Element 2. Self-awareness and Element 3. Relationships with Adults and Peers	Citizenship skills involve conflict resolution through non-confrontational problem solving with adult support.	Citizen skills students can identify behaviors that foster cooperation in groups and conflict resolution through non-confrontational problem solving (independently and within a group without adult support).
<b>DSL 4</b> Acceptance Describe differences/similarities in others. Cultural differences/similarities always try to find the commonalities	<b>VELS Social Studies;</b> Element 3 Physical and Cultural Geography	Expanding on concept of community by identifying culture, language and beliefs by acceptance of differences and highlighting commonalities.	Maintain citizenship skills.

DLS	VELS	PreK/K/Grade 1 Skills	Grades 2 and 3 Skills
DSL 5 Kindness, fairness, advocating, pre-leadership and group skills	VELS Social Studies; Element 2 Family and Community, Civics, Government, and Society	Citizenship skills for working in groups kindness (belonging) and fairness (equality).	Maintain citizenship skills.

### Expanding to Global Citizenship

Building upon citizenship skills towards global citizenship skills by promoting alignment with the [National Council on the Social Studies](#) (NCSS) and NCSS’s [College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\)](#) Framework for PreK through Grade 3 by referencing the **VELS Element 3 Physical and Cultural Geography** developmental indicators.

- As a global citizen it is developmentally appropriate for students to identify similarities and differences from others (cultural, likes and dislikes, gender, skin color, hair, and eye color). Best practice is having materials and visuals that are representative of people, cultures and the community in which they live.

### PBS Kids Democratic Themes

The following VT Pubic/PBS Kids resources are aligned with the VELs and support introducing **democratic themes** including civics, citizenship, social skills and community membership for PreK through grade 2.

**PBS Kids:** [You, Me and Community](#) (Video topics and activities include civics and government) (PreK-Grade 2)

- [Daniel Tiger In the Neighborhood Voting Booth](#) (PreK/K)
  - [Let’s Vote Bingo](#) and other activities (PreK/K)
  - [Let’s Vote Bingo](#) and other activities (Grades 1 and 2)

**PBS Kids** [Let’s Go Luna!](#) and [Arthur All About Community](#) (Video topics and activities include world cultures, celebrations, and geography. PreK/K and Grades K-2)

- [Civics for Young Learners](#) (Arthur educator PreK-Grade 2 resource)
- [We Are All Different](#) (Video PreK/K)

**PBS Kids:** [City Island Series](#) (Video topics and activities include citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, community roles and responsibilities. PreK/K and Grades K-2)

- [Learning about Different Perspectives](#) video and activities (PreK-Grade 2)
- [Rules at the Skate Park](#) video and activities (PreK-Grade 2)

**PBS Kids [Social and Emotional Learning](#)** (Video and activities include relationship skill building, self-regulation and group interactions. (PreK/K)

- [Daniel Tiger: Life's Little Lessons Video Series](#) with educator resources and activities (PreK/K)
- [Speaking Out Against Unfairness](#) video (PreK/K)

## **Current PBS Kids Resources**

[Teach Your Way](#) during the 2024-25 school year with this timely collection of flexible PBS KIDS resources, aligned to themes and skills for PreK-2nd grade students. From exploring resources like video clips, interactive games, printables, self-paced professional learning opportunities, classroom posters and more, choose which you will integrate to support your young learners.

You can also use the **Teach Your Way** calendar and teacher planner to integrate media in creative and developmentally appropriate ways, all year long!

Visit the [Ready to Learn](#) collection for even more science, math, art, and social-emotional learning resources.

## **Inspiration**

The world needs a sense of worth, and it will achieve it only by its people feeling they are worthwhile. (Fred Rogers)

We hope this special issue on the **Five Democratic Life Skills for a Civil Society** (Gartrell, 2023) VELs indicators, and PBS resources provided inspiration for promoting citizenship building skills for each and every child. **Early educators can make a difference** by including citizenship learning opportunities that supports belonging, acceptance, perspective taking, conflict resolution, advocacy, executive functioning (self-regulation) and group building skills to create “a more perfect union”.

## **Five Democratic Life Skills Resources**

Gartrell, D. (2021, June 10). [A Road Forward: Five Democratic Life Skills for a Civil Society](#). National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Gartrell, D. [Five Democratic Life Skills Presentation Handouts](#).

Gartrell, D. (2023). Education for a Civil Society: Teaching Young Children to Gain Five Democratic Life Skills (Second Edition). National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Washington D.C.