

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS

LESSON 2: WHAT IS A CIVIC PROFESSIONAL?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 💡 *Develop a deeper understanding of civic professionalism.*
- 💡 *Learn about civic purposes in education and future work.*

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson helps participants develop an understanding of civic professionalism by catalyzing discussions about the nature of work and civic life. It uses the “Chalk Talk” method—a starting point for generating ideas—to encourage dialogue among participants. The lesson culminates in a reflective activity that supports participants in shaping their own definitions of civic professionalism.

SUGGESTED PLAN [⌚ 75 minutes]

LESSON PREPARATION

1. Consider assigning background readings on civic professionalism to ground this conversation. The University of Minnesota's Citizen Professional Center provides a short overview, "The Citizen Professional Idea" (see <https://innovation.umn.edu/citizen-professional-center/the-citizen-professional-idea/>). The Recommended Readings section at the end of this guide offers additional resources.

2. Review the Chalk Talk method (www.schoolreforminitiative.org/download/chalk-talk/), which will be used to encourage participation in this session.

3. Prepare to host the Chalk Talk. Post questions around the room that enable participants to reflect on and respond to the theme of civic professionalism (consider using 5 to 6 questions, but it depends on the size of the group). You can use spaces on multiple boards and/or use large flip chart paper situated around the room to post question prompts. Be sure to leave room for written responses.

Questions for the Chalk Talk activity can be tailored to class readings and local contexts. Some general examples follow:

- What does civic professionalism mean to you?
- Why is civic professionalism important?
- What are the wicked problems you most want to address?
- How can professional experts help mobilize and expand democratic authority to solve wicked problems?
- What is the impact of your studies on you as a civic professional?
- How will civic professionalism be part of your future work?
- What questions do you have for others about civic professionalism or wicked problems?

CHALK TALK INTRODUCTION [⌚ 5 minutes]

Explain the Chalk Talk method, emphasizing that it is a silent activity.

Offer some simple ground rules for posting on the boards, referring to the Community Learning Agreement developed in Lesson 1. Ask if anyone wants to add anything to the ground rules.

Read all of the Chalk Talk questions aloud to the group and make sure they are clear.

GALLERY WALK TO OFFER RESPONSES [⌚ 15 minutes]

Have participants circulate and write responses under the questions on the boards.

After they have a chance to go around the room to respond to each question, give participants time to return to the questions to review responses others have offered.

Invite participants to add to what is written on the boards and encourage them to make connections among responses.

SMALL-GROUP DIALOGUE [⌚ 20 minutes]

Ask participants to form small groups around the posted questions. Each group should have at least 3 to 4 participants to allow small-group conversations. If you don't have enough people, some questions can be without a group discussion.

Small groups should spend time discussing their question and the posted responses. It works best to have a visible space dedicated to recording key insights from the small-group conversations (This can be an online shared document, a second sheet of paper, or another chalkboard column.)

After 7-8 minutes or so, the group should rotate to a new question. The groups may choose to leave one person as the "table host" for the next round to provide continuity between the groups.

If time permits, you can have participants rotate to a third question.

LARGE-GROUP DEBRIEF AND HARVESTING [⌚ 20 minutes]

Bring students together in a circle for a large-group discussion. Rather than have them simply report what happened during their discussions, ask them to share critical insights. You can start this process by asking a few probing questions:

- What stories/insights did you hear in your conversations?
- What responses most informed your learning?
- What responses most surprised you?
- What questions did this activity raise that you'd like to discuss with others?

INDIVIDUAL DEFINITIONS OF CIVIC PROFESSIONALISM [⌚ 15 minutes]

As a final reflective activity, ask participants to write their own individual definitions of civic professionalism based on what they learned during the session.

Invite participants to share their definitions in pairs and then have some participants read their definitions to the group.

Record key words and takeaways from the definitions, and then ask students to add their individual definitions to a shared document.

