

# Exploring Civic Engagement through Early Childhood Special Education

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## **Abstract**

This unit is meant to support students with autism in exploring civic engagement through the lens of early childhood special education. With specialized teaching resources and features including modeling, Pivotal Response Training, social story use and more, students will begin to **explore their purpose as civic participants. By exploring a police station, a grocery store and a library, students will gain hands-on experience with teaching strategies and special education supports to learn about essential places in the community. In addition, the police station will give students safety skill instruction and will allow them to practice identifying important emergency responders in the community. The grocery store will give students beginner vocational and life skills practice that will shape their understanding of job skills they can perform. The library will be a chance for students to give back to the community by volunteering to organize books. This will give students the chance to practice hands-on participation and to get to know a positive social environment in the community. These trips into the community at such an early stage of development will create a foundation of learning for students to grow and cultivate interest in the community. Students with autism will begin to develop skills to become productive civic members of society.**

Keywords: **Autistic support, special education, life skills, vocational skills, community engagement**

## **Unit Content**

In the field of special education, much time is taken to modify the general curriculum to support students in specialized classes to support learning difficulties, including the varied challenges of children on the autism spectrum. There are not many curriculums that are created to directly serve the special education student population, and it is difficult to support their early social studies development without any acknowledgment of the difficulties they face day to day. With the students I teach in the communities I serve, most of my students are at a preschool-kindergarten level academically, so they are several years below their cognitive functioning in first and second grade. This is an early age where students are developing an understanding of their community and themselves. For these students to learn and develop the foundational skills they will need for successful adult lives, they need early civic engagement education and support in understanding their school, their community, and how they can fit in.

Children with autism are at risk for accidents and wandering due to their delayed safety skills. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported that in 2021, 286 children on the autism spectrum were reported missing to the NCMEC, and 67% were recovered within one

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week (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, n.d.) The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children also reports that more than half of children on the autism spectrum disorder will go missing in their lives (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, n.d.). It is very critical that students gain the experience and education early on to identify important people and places in their community in cases of an emergency or if they should get lost in the community. By being able to identify police officers or a place such as their local library or grocery store, students can seek safety in uncertain circumstances. It is crucial that children learn and gain real-life experience with their surrounding community. This unit seeks to educate students about their community and instill a sense of belonging and familiarity within their community. This unit begins the essential job of integrating students with autism into the community and teaching essential life skills.

I teach elementary autistic support in the School District of Philadelphia. My class is about 6 students (fluctuating throughout the year) with needs that are on all parts of the spectrum of autism. The students in my class are in kindergarten, first, and second grade in a self-contained classroom. I have four students who currently are identified as non-verbal, which means they are limited verbally and are working on developing their functional language. For some, this means utilizing other means of communication such as sign language, picture symbols, or a communication device. My students are also very low-performing academically and are currently learning to identify the alphabet and numbers. We spend most of the day working on life skills and functional communication in order to support the students with everyday skills. Social skill and life skill intervention and instruction are important for students with autism, and this unit provides practical experience and support in community engagement.

While the current social studies curriculum for kindergarten is centered around units called “All about me” where students explore themselves, this unit arises from the belief that we also need a curriculum that utilizes literature and hands-on activities to teach students about themselves in relation to their roles in the community. For the current special education population that I work with, and I am sure many special education teachers are facing this same situation, the lack of a connection between social studies instruction and supporting students’ community and civic engagement skills development is evident.

My main goal as a teacher is to care for and support my students so that they can make social, emotional, academic, and behavioral progress to eventually be successful members of society and be able to live a comfortable and happy life. By imbedding together the exploration of self, of school, and the community, my students can work towards understanding their place in society and how to participate in their community.

While exploring the Roadmap of the Educating for American Democracy initiative at <https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/>, I found that its Civic Participation theme was fitting for developing this curriculum unit. With an emphasis on how citizens’ active engagement

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has mattered for American society, we can explore these experiences in history to unpack some of the disability laws that over time have impacted the lives of individuals with disabilities and how they have greatly improved my students' lives today, though many challenges persist. This will provide the background and the rationale for why it is important to engage students as young civic participants in their community and society.

### Rationale

One of the first readings we discussed and unpacked in my Teachers Institute of Philadelphia seminar was about the 504 section of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and how people had protested and fought for their rights as individuals with disabilities. *The 25 Day Siege That Brought Us 504* was a central example of citizens who were informed and were able to participate in a community through building relationships and problem-solving, which connects to the key concepts of Civic Participation in the Roadmap (Educating for American Democracy, 2021). I want to show my students that they can make changes and have an impact in their community and to give them the skills and experience to do so.

The typical “All About Me” approach is used to teach students about themselves and to allow students to explore their lives at home and at school. Students explore rules and regulations at home and at school as well, to set the foundation for following rules in the classroom. As this is the first time many of these students are in a school setting, the time taken to teach children about themselves is extensive. It is important to make them feel comfortable in school and for the students to establish their independence within the school community. Many of these essential lessons focus on good/ bad choices, friendship, and self-reflection. The purpose of this “All About Me” approach is to allow students to learn more about themselves and to understand their self-worth. This allows students to connect with one another in the class and to create a sense of community within the classroom. It is important to establish these norms in kindergarten so that students can develop their sense of self and continue to grow in elementary school and beyond. As outlined in *Scholastic*, this curriculum can take the form of a morning meeting and lessons throughout the day that are meant to help students learn to become successful classroom citizens (Ackerman, 2013).

In this unit, I have created challenges and expanded this teaching for students with disabilities, giving them the opportunity to learn more about not just about themselves but also about their roles as classroom and community citizens through their civic engagement. These lessons for students with disabilities are important to target early in the child’s school career, as kindergarten is a formative and developmental time where students are often able to absorb and retain more information than in later years. Some of the challenges that are present in teaching students with disabilities about community engagement are that the community exposure is usually new, and sometimes it is difficult to predict how students will react or respond to new experiences. In my experience as a primary autistic support teacher in the School District of Philadelphia, I have

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found that many families are hesitant to take their children with disabilities into the community for fear of how they will react, and how they will be perceived by society. As an advocate for families, I empathize with this challenge and I believe that practice and exposure can help students to gain the experience early on to be able to get to know and understand their communities, making the experience less foreign and scary. An important part of this unit and in teaching in the field of special education is family engagement. In order to support students with disabilities, education and support should be individualized to the student and the challenges or difficulties they are facing. The first step is contacting families to discuss their experiences and their goals for integrating their child into the community. This contact is important in the use of this lesson to support families and their children with disabilities.

### **Background**

I am passionate about being an advocate for my students and their families by giving them an appropriate education that supports their whole being. With literacy, music, hands-on activities, art projects, and more, we will explore the impact our students can make in their community and how they can be civic participants towards progress. To accommodate all different types of learners, including the great variety of special education students I teach, I will include different activities and learning opportunities that are based on Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Cherry, 2021). This will allow students to explore different types of learning and broaden their understanding of learning. It is important for students to think critically about the way they enjoy learning and how they can step out of their comfort zones to try different types of learning experiences.

### **Teaching Strategies**

The population that this curriculum is geared towards is early childhood special education students. It will provide a framework for allowing these students, like others, to learn about how to engage in their communities.

It is a good idea before the first lesson to send a form home and ask families about their child's involvement in the community, where they visit, how teachers can support families, and if there is any way the students can improve with their community interactions. One of the assessments post-implementation of the curriculum will involve students logging their involvement in the community throughout the school year at home in a notebook. This is a good vocational/ life skills homework log that can be used all year and that will reflect the students' progress in integration into the community.

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The National Council for Social Studies suggests the use of meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active approaches and strategies to facilitate the learning of social studies. This unit will use read-alouds, play-based learning, and field trip opportunities to foster investigative learning. The unit will consist of three lessons focused on three places in the community where students can explore the role that individuals have in the care and keeping of the community.

The first lesson will be centered around the rules and safety of the community through the experience of visiting a police station or meeting a police officer or emergency responder. The second lesson will explore the responsible behaviors of citizens in the community, and this experience will take place at a grocery store to explore life skills and social skills that are necessary for inclusion in the community. The third lesson will include a library visit and the development of a service project that will allow students to take part in their community.

The unit will include objectives that are aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education Social Studies state standards for kindergarten. The first lesson will discuss the basic rules and safety regulations in a community and will align with the Standard - 5.3.K.C (Identify roles of firefighters, police officers, and emergency workers). The objective for students in this lesson will be: with prompting and support, students will be able to identify a member of their community whose purpose is to provide safety and assistance. This lesson will also be focused on how to ask for help when in the community. The lesson will be centered around the first responders who can help in a crisis and can be useful for students to identify and recognize their social environment.

The lesson will start with an inquiry-based activity, which will either be a field trip to a local police station, having a police officer visit the school, or a virtual field trip to investigate the purpose of emergency response individuals and their role in the community. Students will learn through questioning and demonstration how to identify these emergency responders and how they can help the community when in need. A virtual field trip would be the most convenient resource to use for this lesson. Kidvision is a PBS Kids-sponsored website that uses videos to create virtual learning experiences where children can watch other children go to places in the community and all around the country to learn about the world around them. They offer hundreds of free videos and trips that you can view on youtube and on their website or you can purchase a subscription to be connected to even more content (Kidvision, 2021). Kidvision has two virtual learning experiences, "Take a Field Trip to The Police Station" and "A Day with a Police Officer," that can be used together or separately for this lesson. The class will observe the virtual field trips and document observation notes as a class. The teacher should facilitate the discussion and guide students to notice the importance of emergency responders.

Next, the students will read *Let's Meet a Police Officer* (Cloverleaf Books: Community Helpers) by Gina Bellisario. Students will respond to the story by filling out a 5 W's graphic organizer outlining *Who* they are learning about, *What* they learned from the story, *When* they can use a

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police officer's help, *Where* they can find a police officer, and *Why* police officers and emergency responders are important. As a concluding post-assessment, it is important to allow students to reflect, investigate and explore the content and experiences in their own ways. The Gardner Theory of Multiple Intelligences will be utilized here as a means of assessment, allowing students to reflect and demonstrate their learning in one of several ways. Students will be given the opportunity to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play.

The second lesson in the unit will teach students about responsible behaviors of citizens in the community. This will be done by providing students with practical experience. The field trip or simulation will take place at a grocery store to explore life skills and social skills that are necessary for inclusion in the community and to teach students about how to be capable economic and social citizens. The standard that will be utilized in this lesson is Pennsylvania Department of Education Standard - 5.3.K.F (Identify and explain behaviors for responsible classroom citizens). The objective will be, with prompting and support, that students will be able to identify and explain in the classroom appropriate behaviors to use in a grocery store. This will allow students to learn in the classroom about social skills, manners, and appropriate conversation skills when in a grocery store setting. Because courteous and capable business and social interactions are important for a thriving civil society, this lesson will also allow students to learn about what being a good citizen means. This is the second objective that the students will learn in this lesson, centered around teaching socially appropriate behaviors that will support students' development into being responsible citizens. The second objective is, with prompting and support, students will be able after this lesson to identify 2 traits of a good citizen.

This lesson will also allow students to explore play-based learning utilizing Pivotal Response Training, which in the field of applied behavior analysis is used to support students' use of positive social behaviors (Sukhodolsky, 2021) The Pivotal response training is used for early childhood students to expand communication skills through the use of play. This type of treatment is also naturally reinforcing, as it rewards students for appropriately requesting certain toys or activities. This "pivotal" area of communication is meant to motivate individuals to interact, and this will be used in this lesson to simulate opportunities for social interactions in the community. (Sukhodolsky, 2021) This simulation will look like a play experience where students can interact with food and customers as if they were working or shopping in a grocery store.

In similar fashion, a private school for students with autism, The Nexus School, created a grocery store simulator to support students' job skill development and social skills (Iadonisi, 2022). This type of simulation allows older students to practice job skills so that they can work in grocery stores and acquire jobs as they age out of the school system. It is important to prepare students' vocational skills early on for success after they age out of school (Iadonisi, 2022). This

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can be done at the elementary school level to teach students appropriate social skills with individuals they do not know and to learn the vocabulary necessary for the job. This vocabulary can involve food, equipment, and other things they may see at a grocery store. With this unit being centered around students in kindergarten and first grade, the vocabulary to address would be fruit, vegetables, canned goods, snack foods, students' favorite foods, and common ingredients for cooking. This simulation can be done over and over and can also be modified to support students with learning about healthy choices or finding the correct ingredients for cooking, which is also beneficial to do in the classroom for life skills development. In this unit, the foundational work is done to teach students about our community and how grocery stores are beneficial in providing jobs for everyone and providing essential food and products that people use every day. This is done in a play set to use pivotal response treatment to support students' development of socialization and to get students interested and engaged in the topic of grocery shopping.

Another important teaching practice that will be utilized in this lesson is modeling, which is learning through imitation (Association for Science in Autism Treatment, 2021). This teaching procedure can be used in person or virtually from a video model. The second lesson in this unit will have a field trip component or a video model example. Implementing this lesson can take students to a nearby convenience store or grocery store if that is possible for them. A video model is also available and will support students' acquisition of the skills from this experience.

Similar to the previous post-assessment, students will reflect, investigate and explore the content and experiences in their way through multiple forms of expression. Again, Gardner Theory of Multiple Intelligences will be utilized here as a means of assessment, allowing students to reflect and demonstrate their learning in one of several ways. Students will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play. For this particular lesson, the teacher will also assess and support students along the way with learning through practice in the grocery store simulation.

The next lesson is centered around service and giving back to the community. Students will go into the community and visit their local library to engage in a service project that will benefit the community. The standard for this lesson is Pennsylvania Standard - 5.2.K.C (Identify classroom projects/activities that support leadership and service). The objective that the students will learn through this lesson is that, with prompting and support, students will be able to identify a way to support their community. It is important before the field trip for the teacher to reach out to their local library to get permission for students to volunteer to help return books. In addition, having extra chaperones will be beneficial too in supporting students with this type of service project. It is important for students to help their community, but they will need help themselves as well. Many libraries ask for volunteers to help organize and return books to their correct location. This

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service project will allow students to volunteer and to support their local library, teaching them the impact of service projects.

The students will also brainstorm ways to be kind to people in their community, and explore a map of the community to find places that many people can visit and socialize. This is also a good time to review grocery stores and other places where emergency workers may interact with the community. Students will learn about libraries as a place in the community for everyone to visit. The class will read a book and watch a video of children going to a library to visit and learn. Students need to watch a video or “virtual field trip” to learn through modeling and to observe what they will be doing when they go to the library themselves. The video model will be shown and then students will read a social story about going to the library. Social stories are a widely used resource in the applied behavior analysis and special education field as a way of teaching students about appropriate behaviors and learned skills and experiences (Gray, 2022). Anytime students go on a field trip or have a special event coming up that is outside of their everyday routines like an assembly or fire drill, I use social stories to support my students with autism. Social stories are an essential teaching practice for special education teachers and can either be written by the teacher or found online, usually obtainable for free from other teachers. The social story that will be used in this unit is from ASERT, the Autism Services, Education, Resources and Training collaborative in Pennsylvania, in partnership with The Philadelphia Autism Project. It is called *At the Library: What is a Library?* (ASERT, 2022). This story will help students to learn more about field trips to the library and to know what to anticipate when they go. At the library, students will help to put away books in order to serve their community. Again, it is important to coordinate with the staff at the library to see if these community projects are appropriate and to gain permission.

Similar to the previous post-assessment, students will reflect, investigate and explore the content and experiences in their way through many forms of expression. The Gardner Theory of Multiple Intelligences will be utilized once more as a means of assessment, allowing students to reflect and demonstrate their learning in one of several ways. Students will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play. For this particular lesson, the teacher will also assess and support students along the way with learning through carrying out a community service project to support their fellow citizens in the community.

As mentioned before, a takeaway assessment and ongoing reflection will be used through the use of a Vocational Skills Workbook. When students are in school or at home, they can document their community interactions to collect and share with their teachers, classmates, and families. This will be a great way to bridge the gap between school and home by making community involvement and social skills more generalized between school and home. This lesson in working with the community is important for students to learn in school to develop their vocational and social skills, but also for families to be encouraged to continue this at home. If

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families are struggling to bring their child into the community, it is important for them to communicate that to their schools, and then teachers can assist their efforts with added instruction and additional support.

### Classroom Activities

#### Lesson 1:

This lesson will teach the rules and safety skills used in the community through the experience of visiting a police station or meeting a police officer or emergency responder (depending on which experience is most suitable for the classroom using this unit)

- Materials needed:
  - Kidvision video
    - A day with a Police Officer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJ6FIPuhYk0>
    - Take a Trip to the Police Station  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6bdvb\\_xXgA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6bdvb_xXgA)
  - Easel or whiteboard for reflection of the rules and safety skills
- Timeline for completion:
  - This lesson should take about 1-2 days depending on the the type of field trip the teacher is able to use.
- Stated objectives (specific to the lesson)
  - With prompting and support, students will be able to identify a member of their community whose purpose is to provide safety and assistance.
- District, state, and national curriculum standards addressed:
  - Standard - 5.3.K.C (Identify roles of firefighters, police officers, and emergency workers)
- An evaluative tool:
  - 5 W's worksheet
    - See resources (C)
  - Entry in students' Community Journal where they will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play.
- Reference to the **teaching strategies** mentioned above:
  - Inquiry based learning will be utilized in this lesson to allow students to learn from their own experiences and to build upon their knowledge of their community.
- A step-by-step guide to completion:

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1. Inquiry-based activity which will either be a field trip to a local police station, having a police officer visit the school, or a virtual field trip to investigate the purpose of emergency response individuals and their role in the community.
2. Watch Kidvision videos, *Take a Field Trip to The Police Station* and *A Day with a Police Officer*
  - a. Students should take observational notes in their Community Notebooks
3. Read *Let's Meet a Police Officer* (Cloverleaf Books: Community Helpers) by Gina Bellisario
4. Complete 5 W's Worksheet for the read aloud, see resources for worksheet (A)
5. Students will reflect on their experience with police officers in their Community Journal

### Lesson 2:

Explore the responsible behaviors of citizens in the community. This experience will take place at a grocery store to explore life skills and social skills that are necessary for inclusion in the community.

- Materials needed:
  - Grocery store based materials, plastic foods and other play based materials such as a cash register
  - Kidvision video modeling grocery shopping
  - Community Journal
- Timeline for completion:
  - Depending on the type of activities and experiences used, this may take 1-2 days to carry out the lesson.
- Stated objectives (specific to the lesson):
  - With prompting and support, that students will be able to identify and explain in the classroom appropriate behaviors to use in a grocery store.
  - With prompting and support, students will be able to identify 2 traits of a good citizen.
- District, state, and national curriculum standards addressed:
  - Pennsylvania Department of Education Standard - 5.3.K.F (Identify and explain behaviors for responsible classroom citizens)
- An evaluative tool:
  - Entry in students' Community Journal, where they will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play
- Reference to the teaching strategies mentioned above:
  - Modeling will be used to teach students appropriate behaviors to use when

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engaging in the community, such as making eye contact, communicating preferences/ wants/ needs and more.

- A step-by-step guide to completion:

1. Students will visit a grocery store or watch a video simulating a grocery store field trip from Kidvision.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTVnATGu5d0>

2. Students will engage in Pivotal Response Treatment where training and modeling of appropriate social skills will be taught in play based learning.
3. Students will complete an entry in their Community Journal where they will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play.

### Lesson 3:

This lesson will feature a library visit and development of a service project that will allow students to take part in their community.

- Materials needed
  - Kidvision Library Video
  - Classroom and local library
  - Social story
- Timeline for completion
  - This lesson is meant to give students hands on experience participating in their community and volunteering at a local library. With reviewing social skills and community skills, this lesson should take a week including the trip.
- Stated objectives (specific to the lesson)
  - The objective that the students will learn through this lesson is that, with prompting and support, students will be able to identify a way to support their community.
- District, state, and national curriculum standards addressed
  - The standard for this lesson is Pennsylvania Standard - 5.2.K.C (Identify classroom projects/activities that support leadership and service).
- An evaluative tool
  - Entry in students' Community Journal, where they will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play
- Reference to the teaching strategies mentioned above
  - Modeling and social stories will be used to facilitate students involvement in the community. Modeling will be used to teach socially appropriate behaviors and a social story will be used so that students can anticipate what to expect on the field trip.
- A step-by-step guide to completion:
  1. Students will watch Kidvision video model of a field trip to a library

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2. Students will read a social story on going to the library
  - a. <https://pautism.org/resource/library-social-story/>
3. Students will take a trip to their neighborhood library where they will participate and service their community. The service project that will be carried out will be to volunteer to help put away books that have been returned to their correct location. This service project can be modified or changed depending on the class carrying out this unit.
4. Students will complete an entry in their Community Journal where they will be allowed to write about what they learned, draw a picture of what they learned, create a diorama, compose a song, or create a dance or play.

### Resources

ASERT. (2022). *At the Library Social Story, Parts 1–2*. ASERT Bringing Autism Resources Together. <https://pautism.org/resource/library-social-story/>

- This resource will be used in the third lesson to support students with their field trip to the library with a social story. This will help to narrate and outline what they will see at the library so they know what to expect when they go on a trip there.

Bellisario, G., & Atkinson, C. (2013). *Let's Meet a Police Officer (Cloverleaf Books™ — Community Helpers)* (Illustrated ed.). Millbrook Press™.

- This literature will be used to support students' understanding of police officers, with the use of a story to narrate and reinforce the idea of safety for emergency responders in the community.

Kidvision. (2021). *Kidvision*. Welcome to Kidvision Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Standards Education. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://www.kidvisionprek.org/about.jsp>

- These videos will allow students to meet and get to know a police officer individually in the first lesson. This will be important in creating a foundation for safety skills and knowing who to ask for help when needed. In addition, the kidvision website will allow teachers to view the different virtual field trips to the grocery store and library to give students the opportunity to view a model of potential field trips they can take.

### Work Cited

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Ackerman, Shira. (2013, January 25). Social Studies: Kindergarten. Scholastic. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/others/articles/social-studies-kindergarten.html>

This resource aims to educate teachers and professionals in education on how to use social studies instruction to support students. The website is Scholastic, which is regularly used in education and in classrooms to teach students about social studies concepts in all grades. This resource is useful in giving ideas about important social studies activities and components that can be used in this lesson and in other social studies lessons.

ASERT. (2022). *At the Library Social Story, Parts 1–2*. ASERT Bringing Autism Resources Together. <https://paautism.org/resource/library-social-story/>

This source is a social story written by ASERT, the Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative, to support children and individuals who have autism with going into the community and visiting a library. The social story is free to the public and can be accessed from anywhere. In this unit, it will be used to teach students about what they are to expect when they go to the library.

*Autism & wandering*. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. (n.d.). Retrieved June 1, 2022, from <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/autism>

This source provides statistics and information formatted in a comprehensive guide on the Center for Missing and Exploited Children website. This source outlines the issue of students with autism wandering and the dangers it can lead to. The guide includes an overview, risk factors, statistics, what the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children is doing about it, recommended programs and videos. This source is important background information for this unit and for all who work with individuals with disabilities.

Bellisario, Gina & Atkinson, Cale. (2013). *Let's Meet a Police Officer (Cloverleaf Books™ — Community Helpers)* (Illustrated ed.). Millbrook Press™.

This is a children's picture book that aims to teach children about police officers, how to identify them, their role in the community and why they are essential to the community. This is a great read-aloud for primary grades, kindergarten-second grade, and is part of a series of books on meeting community helpers. These books can be used in this unit and beyond to provide more literacy examples of essential life skills.

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Cherry, Kendra. (2021, July 28). *Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/gardners-theory-of-multiple-intelligences-2795161>

This is a resource in cognitive psychology that explains Howard Gardner's "Theory of Multiple Intelligences." This article outlines each intelligence with strengths, characteristics, and potential career choices. The article also discusses criticism to the theory and visuals to support understanding.

Educating for American Democracy. (2021, October 7). *The Seven Themes*. <https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/7themes/>

The aim of the Seven themes *Roadmap* is to provide guidance and outline the content and instruction of important and essential areas of social studies and civic education. The seven themes are civic participation, our changing landscape, we the people, a new government & constitution, institutional & social transformation, people in the world and contemporary debates & possibilities. Each theme provides thematic questions, key concepts and other important teaching resources for educators.

Ervin, Michael. (1986). *The 25 Day Siege That Brought Us 504* | *Independent Living Institute*. Independent Living Institute. <https://www.independentliving.org/docs4/ervin1986.html>

This is an important journal article in outlining an event in history that was essential to the background of this unit and to the area of special education history. This event is a time when people with disabilities fought for their rights and their inclusion into the general population. This then brought about change and is important for educators to know about the history of individuals with disabilities and why it is important to immerse our students with disabilities in the community early on.

Gray, Carol (2022). *What is a social story?* - Carol Gray - *Social stories*. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/social-stories/what-is-it/>

This resource is the foundation of the use of social stories and provides educators with the skills and support to create their own social stories for individuals with disabilities. New experiences and certain skills are hard for individuals with disabilities to grasp naturally, so social stories provide a more in-depth explanation and support to teach new skills.

Iadonisi, Matteo. (2022, April 26). *Grocery store simulator helps students with autism build career skills*. 6abc Philadelphia. <https://6abc.com/philly-proud-autism-student/11774311/>

This article is a news article that highlights a private school in Abington Township, Pennsylvania that created a grocery store simulator to help support job skill instruction in

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students who are again out of school. This is for much older students than the ones that this unit is designed for, but this serves the overall goal that down the line of educational experience, students will acquire vocational and job skills before they age out of school.

Kidvision. (2021). *Kidvision*. Welcome to Kidvision Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Standards Education. Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://www.kidvisionprek.org/about.jsp>

Kidvision is a pre-kindergarten channel of videos that are used as virtual field trips. The channel shows a woman with a small group of students going to different community places and asking questions, showing life experiences and is very educational as well as free to the public.

Association for Science in Autism Treatment (2021, September 27). *Modeling*. Association for Science in Autism Treatment. <https://asatonline.org/for-parents/learn-more-about-specific-treatments/applied-behavior-analysis-aba/aba-techniques/modeling/>

In the field of Applied Behavior Analysis, modeling is an important concept in teaching new skills. Modeling provides students with real life examples that they can more easily transfer to their own performance. It is used in all fields, environments and this study highlights its importance.

## Appendix

A)



Hello families!

We are starting an exciting unit where we will be learning about our communities and finding ways to be engaging and responsible citizens! In order to gain some insight into students experiences, please answer the following questions regarding your experience with your child in the community and any goals you have for your child's community skills.

How often do you and your child go into the community and where do you go?

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Where does your child enjoy going in the community and where do they have trouble (if this happens)?

Do you have any questions or concerns about supporting your child in the community?



B) One of the assessments post-implementation of the curriculum will involve students logging their involvement in the community throughout the school year at home in a notebook. This is a good vocational/ life skills homework log that can be used all year and reflect the students' progress in integration into the community. This can be done in a notebook or using the following worksheet, used for every experience, and compiled or bound into a journal.



My Community Journal

Date:

Today, I went to \_\_\_\_\_.

Write and draw about one thing you saw or learned about:

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A) 5 W's Graphic Organizer summarizing the story,

## 5 W's

Who did you learn about? 	
What did you learn about police officers?	

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 <p>what</p>	
<p>When can you use a police officer's help?</p>  <p>when</p>	
<p>Where can you find a police officer?</p>  <p>where</p>	
<p>Why are police officers important?</p>  <p>why</p>	

### Appendix

This unit implements the academic standards discussed previously by giving students hands-on experience to acquire real life experience through meeting people in their communities and visiting important places. When students reflect in their journal about the places they went to, they are able to think critically about their community experiences and to work through any potential problems or achievements they come across.