

- d. Identify and practice selected forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic;
- e. Explain actions citizens can take to influence public policy decisions;
- f. Recognize that a variety of formal and informal actors influence and shape public policy;
- g. Examine the influence of public opinion on personal decision-making and government policy on public issues;
- h. Explain how public policies and citizen behaviors may or may not reflect the stated ideals of a democratic republican form of government;
- i. Describe how public policies are used to address issues of public concern;
- j. Recognize and interpret how the "common good" can be strengthened through various forms of citizen action.

Source: From *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), 1994, Washington, DC: Author. Copyright 1994 by the National Council for the Social Studies.

APPENDIX B:  
"WHAT HAPPENS AT THE  
HOSPITAL": A CURRICULUM  
PROJECT FOR SIX- TO EIGHT-YEAR-  
OLDS

During his spring vacation, seven-year-old Paolo had spent several days in the hospital, recovering from an appendectomy. When he returned to school, Paolo's teacher, Mrs. Vega, invited him to share his hospital experience with the class. Paolo's colorful description of his hospital experience stimulated a great deal of interest among his classmates, as well as the desire of many of his friends to talk about their own hospital experiences. Although some children mentioned having stayed in the hospital before, many could not remember ever being in a hospital, and others could remember being there simply to visit a sick relative or family friend. Noting the high level of interest in hospitals expressed by her students, Mrs. Vega asked them whether they would be interested in learning more about what goes on in hospitals. From their excited reactions to her question, it was clear that the class would welcome the opportunity to participate in a curriculum project focusing on the topic of hospitals.

THE HOSPITAL WEB

To stimulate the children's thinking about the topic and to gain some insight about the level of the children's understanding about hospitals, Mrs. Vega followed up the discussion accompanying Paolo's personal account by engaging them in the development of a curriculum web around the topic of hospitals. The development of a web, or webbing, is a simple and useful planning approach that invites children to brainstorm about a particular topic. As children generate ideas, these are incorporated into an expanded web that becomes a visual illustration of what may be included in a project approach to curriculum planning. Webbing is a playful and open-ended process designed to generate concepts, ideas, and questions related to a topic or theme. Webbing produces a picture of the way ideas may connect with one another. No idea or question is rejected as the web is being generated.

As the children expressed thoughts about hospitals, Mrs. Vega wrote these on a large sheet of paper for all to see. Some children wrote ideas on the chart themselves. After the children seemed to have exhausted all their thoughts about hospitals, Mrs. Vega extended their thinking with some

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3 questions: "Are all the people working at a hospital doctors or nurses?" "How do people get to hospitals?" The children's responses to these questions were added to the web, and the continuing discussion led to additional thoughts from class members. Lannie wondered, for example, whether everyone who goes to the hospital gets well. Davis wanted to know how much it cost to stay in the hospital. Tori was interested in what happens to animals that get sick. These thoughts were added to the web, along with all the other ideas and questions. As the web evolved, Mrs. Vega guided the class toward acknowledging those things about hospitals they knew, those things about hospitals they weren't certain they knew, and those things about hospitals they were certain they did not know. On the web, Mrs. Vega used a code to indicate these various levels of "knowing" indicated by the class.

1 Although webbing doesn't commit the class to investigating all the ideas it contains, many topics and questions generated will become areas of focus during succeeding in-depth exploration. The class may decide to investigate areas of concern lying along any of the web's pathways, depending on what interests them. Curriculum developed through webbing is one way the interests of class members are taken into account. It is one way in which curriculum (e.g., what happens in a learning environment) flows, or emerges, from the dynamic social milieu that is the classroom. Figure 11B.1 shows the web developed by Mrs. Vega's class of six- to eight-year-olds. The questions and issues of concern raised by the class were grouped on the web according to five or six subcategories of interest. These issues and questions formed the basis for Mrs. Vega's plans regarding her children's subsequent investigations into hospitals.

[Another relatively straightforward process for generating ideas to consider as part of a project for study is a procedure called K-W-L [see Chapter 4], or "Know" (What do we already know about the topic?); "What" (What more about the topic do we want to know?); and

2 "Learned" ("What did we learn about the topic?"). In the K-W-L procedure, two lists are created as children express what they already know about a topic and what more they would like to know. This second list ("What more do we want to know?") serves as the point of departure for children's further investigations and is used as a basis for determining the kinds of learning experiences the children engage in. Serially throughout the unit and at the end of the unit, the teacher uses one or more assessment strategies to determine what the children actually learned. Teachers may experiment with both the webbing process and the K-W-L procedure and see which of the procedures best suits them.]

### 3 IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

3 After the web was completed, Mrs. Vega organized her class into collaborative working groups of four to five children. Each group was composed of at least one representative from each age level in the classroom. Once they were organized, the members of each group discussed the topics on the web chart and selected for in-depth investigation several topics that interested them.

1 After she observed which topics were selected, Mrs. Vega discussed with the class possible sources of information about hospitals, as well as possible activities the class might do to learn more about hospitals. From this discussion, it was discovered that the mother of a boy in class (Levi) was a nurse. Bianca, a girl in class, had an uncle studying at the state university to be a veterinarian. Mrs. Vega revealed that her family physician, Dr. McCall, worked one day each week at the local hospital. As they continued to brainstorm about possible sources of information about hospitals and about activities they thought would be exciting, the class generated a Resources and Activities list (see Figure 11B.2).

FIGURE 11B.1 Illustration of hospital web

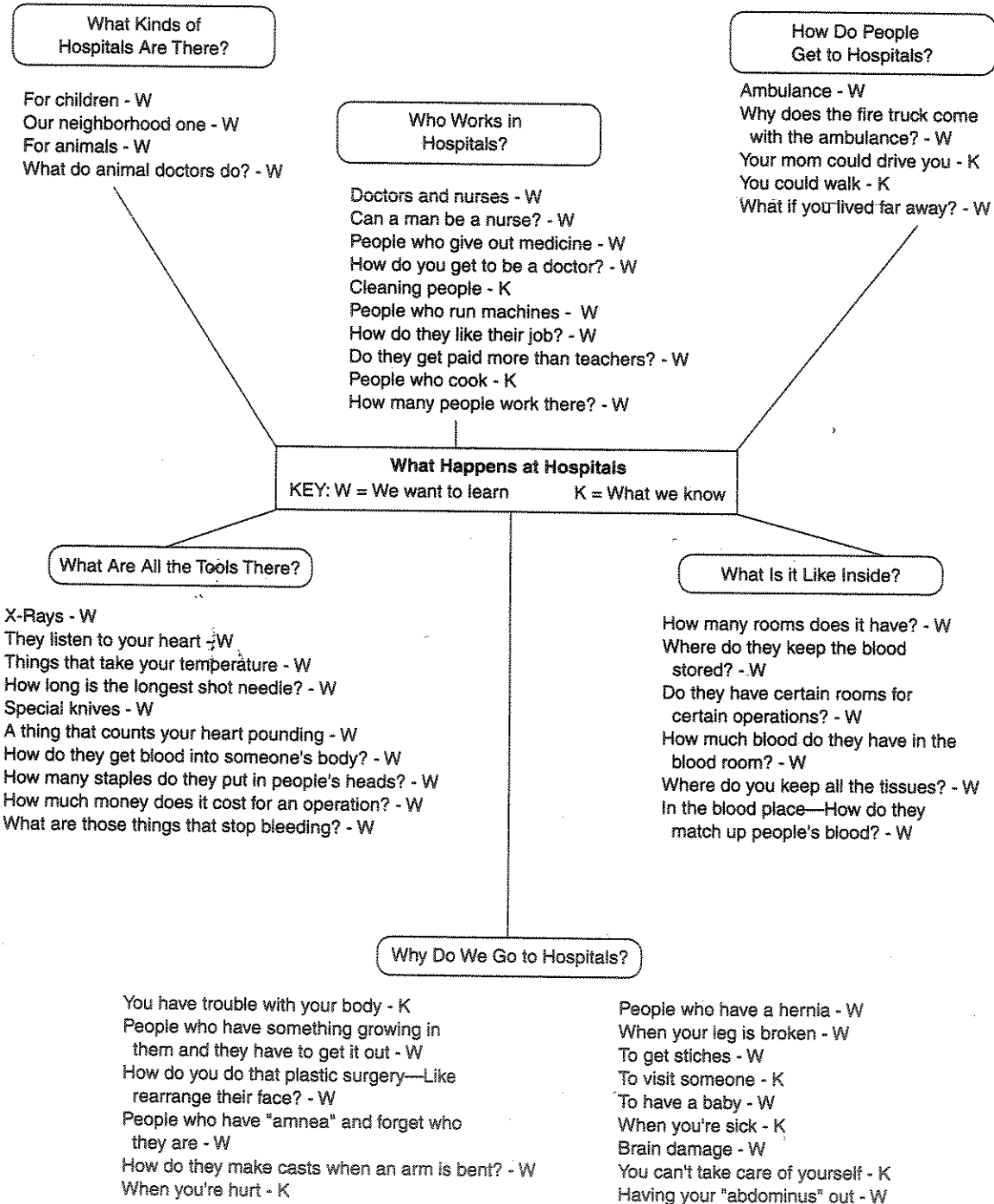


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**FIGURE 11B.2** Representative resources and activities list

1. Visit school and local library for books, tapes, and computer programs about hospitals.
2. Contact "experts" and invite them to speak to the class:
  - Dr. McCall
  - Levi's mother
  - Bianca's uncle
  - A local ambulance driver
  - The school nurse
3. Take a field trip to the local hospital and to the county health clinic.
4. Write and request catalogs from the regional medical supply office.
5. Work with parents to request health and medical brochures from individual family physicians.

2 Throughout the next several weeks, Mrs. Vega and her class were actively engaged in a host of intensive, richly diverse, challenging, and personally meaningful set of learning experiences related to interests they had previously expressed about what takes place in hospitals. The following learning experiences were included among the activities during a six-week period:

3 A visit to the school and local libraries yielded more than thirty books in which hospitals and the role of various medical personnel were discussed. These books formed the basis for extending the children's initial understandings about hospitals and medical care. The children read the books and recorded in their journals information about their topics obtained from the books. Information from the books also led to the development of a list of questions each group set out to address during the unit.

For each of several field trips the class took, a different group of children volunteered to plan

1 the outing. To identify individuals willing to provide transportation, the children wrote and sent letters to parents. Schedules for the dates and times of the trips were made, arrangements for snacks while on the trip were made, and charts indicating how many vehicles were available and how many children each vehicle could accommodate were developed for each trip. The charts also indicated which children would be assigned to which driver.

3 In notebooks brought along on the field trips, each child wrote down things he or she found interesting and wanted to learn more about. The children wrote down questions for further investigation and drew sketches of things they saw at the hospital and the health clinic. Each group developed a map of the different rooms and floors for the locations they visited and indicated on them who worked there and the kind of work done at each site. The children also recorded in their notebooks the kinds of equipment and medical instruments they were able to observe on their visits. On returning to the classroom, the children reviewed their notes and sketches and refined them as they had opportunities over time to reflect and gather new insights.

1 Each collaborative learning group developed a journal in which group members kept a descriptive account of all they were learning about hospitals and medical care—documenting their learning experiences in terms that made sense to them. Contained in these journals were each group member's field notes, sketches and drawings, information gathered from books and discussions with guests, and sample brochures from the medical personnel and establishments they and their parents had visited. In addition, each child maintained a personal notebook in which to record individual reflections about what he or she experienced throughout the project and how he or she felt about those experiences. On a weekly basis, Mrs. Vega reviewed these journals and noted the children's new understandings, their misunderstandings, and their

feelings about the project. She used these weekly reviews as a basis for modifying her project plans and for focusing learning experiences on areas of inquiry in which the children demonstrated continuing interest or misunderstanding.

The children returned from their field trips determined to create an exhibit of medical equipment they learned about. On tables set up around the room and in the school hallway, they displayed medical brochures they received from written inquiries to local physicians and the hospital and health clinic. From their notebook sketches, they drew pictures and made models of medical instruments. From several family physicians, they received donated surplus supplies, such as gauze, surgical tape, latex gloves, tongue depressors, and materials for making tourniquets. On clear acetate, they drew X-ray images; and on discarded animal X-rays they received from a local veterinarian, they labeled different animal bones and body parts. On one memorable day, Bianca's uncle (the student of veterinary medicine) used the animal X-rays to point out different animal body parts and challenged the class to decide in their groups (1) what animal body part was represented and (2) the function of the part.

Prior to a visit from the school nurse, Mrs. Vega encouraged the class to develop a set of questions they wanted her to address. Following the school nurse's visit, during which she responded to their questions and talked with them about first-aid and the dangers of medications, the children decided to sponsor a schoolwide poster contest to publicize these two issues. The children developed guidelines for the contest, publicized the event throughout the school, supervised the display of the posters, established parameters for judging the posters, and determined the contest winners for each of several age categories.

Once again relying on their field notes and sketches, the different groups worked together

to develop a mural and scale model of their local community on large sheets of chart paper taped to a hallway floor. Various construction materials were gathered and used to create buildings, houses, trees, hills, bodies of water, and so forth. Included on the model were the locations and names of important community landmarks, including the school, each child's home, and of course, the hospital. Roadways and intersections were also sketched in and labeled. Again, as time went on, the children had ample opportunity to add to and refine their representations. After first estimating and predicting their answers, the children used the scale model over the course of several days to determine how far each child lived from the hospital, which child lived closest to the hospital, and which child lived farthest. On another occasion, the children took turns giving each other a series of directions beginning with a location on the model to see whether their friends could identify the "target" location.

Each collaborative group collected birth announcements from the local newspaper. Information from the announcements was used to create graphs to report information about weights of babies, time of day the babies were born, names of babies, and gender of each new baby.

A favorite activity was the development of a sociodramatic play area focusing on the hospital and medical care themes. Again, information the class had collected on their field trips (notebook sketches and notes), from books, and from discussions with guests provided the basis of the design and function of the play area. The children equipped this area with surplus items they received from community medical personnel and from home, with props they designed and created themselves (e.g., X-ray machine made from a large, discarded appliance box), and with uniforms found at various secondhand shops or created by the class from scraps of material with the help of their parents. On one occasion, the children brought in favorite dolls and stuffed animals

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3 and, using a scale supplied by the county health clinic, measured and recorded the weight of each "patient" after first estimating it. Another day, the children used this information to develop mathematics problems focusing on differences in weights of the dolls and stuffed animals.

1 Several weeks into the project, Mrs. Vega provided the children with an opportunity to write and send "get well" letters to some patients at the hospital. Using patients' names that Mrs. Vega had received from the Head Nurse at the hospital, the children wrote notes and created cheerful stories and pictures and sent them to selected patients experiencing prolonged hospitalization.

2 The children recorded the scale model of the community they created, as well as the dramatic play area, on videotape. In addition, each group created a script for a hospital story to be dramatized with puppets they created from paper mâché and cloth. The children also created, from assorted arts and crafts materials, hospital sets on which their puppets would perform. In

collaborative learning groups, the children visited other classes in the school and presented their puppet drama, shared the videotape, and discussed the information they had gathered in their journals and notebooks. At the end of the six-week period, these same materials were shared with family members during a special evening presentation in appreciation for the families' participation in the project.

Throughout the period devoted to the evolution of this project, the teacher encouraged the children to continually revisit their products, reflective notes, journals, artwork, and other representations to refine their accounts and the details of their work. The purpose of this refinement was to acquire greater clarity and accuracy of understanding as new experiences may yield deeper meanings as well as new discoveries. At the conclusion of the project, Mrs. Vega was able to use the children's journals, their reflections on their experiences, the videotape, and other products to assess the growth made by the children.

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