

# We The People

## Constitution Activity Kit

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### INTRODUCTION

#### THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Constitution Day is September 17<sup>th</sup> in honor of the birth date of the U.S. Constitution on September 17<sup>th</sup>, in the year 1787. It is the oldest constitution still in use in the world, written with extraordinary insight and foresight by the founding fathers. It is a living, breathing document, written to protect the integrity of the United States of America by encouraging citizen participation in law and government, to promote the understanding of the Bill of Rights, and to protect the citizens from abuse of power by any branch of government. It continues to be as important and relevant today as it was over 200 years ago.

#### THE BIRTH OF "We the People" by Talking Hands Talking Feet

This workshop was developed during the school year 2007-2008 at El Dorado Elementary School in Santa Fe, New Mexico with a multi-age 4<sup>th</sup>/ 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. It all started when the teacher brought to the students' attention that the founding fathers meant something different by "We the People" than what is meant today. By "the People" they meant wealthy, white, male landowners. This got the attention of the children!



Paul and Melanie Zeir of Talking Hands Talking Feet were working on a different project with this class putting poetry to rhythm stick dancing when they were sparked by this discovery in the children. This prompted Paul to write the music of the song "We the People" and then promote the workshop in the classroom. The workshop unfolded over a few sessions and the children were captivated by the process. The song was performed for the families of the children and was broadcast live on the local Santa Fe radio station in March 2008. In July 2008, a group of the original participants and some other children from the community were invited to come to the Talking Hands Talking Feet studio, Humming Grove, to record the song with Paul and Melanie. Many other people have been involved in this project including the teachers Abbie Casias and Jennifer Medeiros, vocalist Devi Borton, Magdelyn Brennan from Fairy Godmother Films, Andy Smith from Moon Recording Services, Christopher Burbridge the web wizard, Carolyn Parrs from Women with Wings, the group of THTF teacher advisors and the support of the families of the children.

*Here is a gift from our school to your school, from our community to your community, from our hearts and minds to yours,*

*Paul & Melanie*

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### THE WORKSHOP – part 1

#### Part 1- GETTING ACQUAINTED

##### CATCHING THE SONG

Listen to the song. Soak in it. Follow along with lyrics provided. Begin to sing along with it. It's an easy song to catch. This step is important for when you do the workshop. Enjoy!

##### CALL & RESPONSE

“We the People” is a call and response song. A small group of students can sing the line “We the People” and the rest of the class can respond in turn. Try various groupings to see what really comes alive.

##### PREAMBLE

The song revolves around the phrase “We the People” from the Preamble of the Constitution of the United States. The core inspiration for the song is to update, redefine and fill out what we mean when we say “We the People”. Before we workshop the meaning of the words “We the People” simply recite the Preamble with your class. Try it at various speeds.



##### *We the People – Purpose*

*The objective of this workshop is to give **new meaning and relevancy** to the Constitution as an **inspiring inroad for young people**. It helps to bring the Constitution into the **context and currency of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. It makes it **accessible** to children in a way that **adds value, respect and understanding...** and is **fun!***

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### *THE LYRICS –the verses*

We the People  
Every Color, Every Voice, Every Gender,  
Every Country, Every Age, Every Body



We the People  
No Slavery, No Hunger, No Poverty,  
No Tyranny, No Pollution, No Cruelty



We the People  
Free To Speak, Free To Learn, Free To Vote,  
Free To Think, Free To Choose, Free To Believe

3.



*THE LYRICS -the chorus & Preamble*

## We the People are One Humanity



We the people of the United States,  
in order to form a more perfect union,  
establish justice, insure domestic tranquility,  
provide for the common defense,  
promote the general welfare,  
and secure the blessings of liberty  
to ourselves and our posterity,  
do ordain and establish this Constitution  
for the United States of America.

(Preamble of the Constitution of the United States of America)

Project by Talking Hands Talking Feet®, Paul A. Zeir – vocals & guitar, Devi Borton – vocals  
Children Vocals: Alden, Amy Borton, Amy Rohr, Annie Medeiros, Ben Brimacombe, Celia Lee,  
Claire Motsinger, Elena, Mykala Gillum, Orrin Beacom, Sara, Silowen Zeir & Tavi Zeir

Project Manager: Melanie Zeir

Recording Engineers: Andy Smith & Melanie Zeir, Song by Paul A. Zeir of Talking Hands Talking Feet®

Words by Paul A. Zeir & 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade class 07-08 at El Dorado Elementary Santa Fe, New Mexico

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Recorded at Humming Grove Studios Santa Fe, New Mexico USA





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### THE WORKSHOP – part 2

#### Part 2 – THE PROCESS

Take some time to open up these questions with your students. It is meant to be a dynamic, free-flowing brainstorm-style process. Let the process catch on! Here are some starter questions:

#### HISTORY

What did the founding fathers mean by “We the People”? Why? This will give historical context to the process. It will also show why the process of updating the phrase “We the People” is so important.

#### WHO ARE “WE THE PEOPLE”?

Ask the students “What do **we** mean by We the People”? Put all the examples on the board. Don’t edit yet. Let the process catch on! All the examples of who “We the People” are can now be brought into the song. This is where a little editing or trimming may help, because you’re trying to find ways to fit their examples into the meter of the song. It really is a poetic process. After you have several examples – try to sing them without using the recording. (You may end up with 20 lines!)

#### WHAT DO WE SAY NO TO?

The second verse in the song is to do with what “We the People”, now with new meaning and relevancy, say ‘no’ to, what we stand in defiance to. Ask the students, “What do ‘We the People’ say **no** to?” “What do ‘We the People’ stand against?” “What does the Constitution stand against?” For example, slavery, oppression, cruelty, discrimination... Repeat the process, as with the first verse, of writing up examples on the board and then fitting the words into the meter of the song. Again practice singing this by itself, without the recording. You may be surprised by the result!



#### OUR RIGHTS – OUR FREEDOMS

Now ask the students, “What are our basic freedoms in this country?” “What are our rights?” Examples are our right to public education or our right to vote. Go through the same process again, writing examples on the board and choosing some of them to sing.

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### THE WORKSHOP- part 3



### Part 3- THE ENACTMENT MOVEMENTS

Re-look at the lyrics of the song provided. You can either choose a few specific words or you can do this with all the words. Ask the students for their ideas for movements that express those words. Choose one movement that everyone can do together for each word.

Here are some tips to help you with the movement:

- Specify before they start whether you want hand movements only or full body movements.
- Note: Encourage them to keep the movements distinct, clear and simple so that all the participants can follow easily. (For example; if someone is twirling around with wild gestures it won't help the process.)
- If there is someone in the class that is very natural with movement, you can ask them to come to the front to help lead the movement.
- Try this process without playing the recording. This is a time to research and discover what movements fit with specific words and ideas.
- The person leading will help to remember the sequence of movements.
- Encourage the children to participate without any pressure, judgment or bias because it is important that they feel free to express themselves. The creative process comes from being open and willing.

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### THE WORKSHOP – part 4



#### Part 4- BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Now we get to the finale of the whole process! It might be good to take a very short break before this last part. If appropriate you can photograph or video this to share with other schools. (See below)

Set up the class in a performance setting. Have a small group in a formation (in lines, arcs or a clump) to sing the line “We the People”. Have another group in formation to sing the verses. Have a third group in formation (possibly in the middle) to do the movements. All three groups should be facing the front – it could be a semi-circular formation. It would be good to have the words written out large enough for everyone to see, perhaps on a poster board, on an overhead projector or whatever method works best in your performance setting.

Sing the song again with group one singing “We the People”, group two singing the lines (every color, every voice...) and group three doing the movements. If you have a movement leader they can be in the front line of their group, in the middle, so that all the children can see the movements. When you get to the preamble, have one of the groups sing “We the People are One Humanity” – softly, and the other two groups will recite the Preamble along with the song. You can do this once or as many times as feels appropriate. This is something that could be practiced and performed at a school assembly.

#### FEEDBACK

Each group of children is unique and so we are sure that the produce from this process will be quite varied. We are interested in finding out how this process unfolds and would really be keen to hear from you. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or if you would like to share your examples, photos or videos from the workshop please send them to [feedback@TalkingHandsTalkingFeet.com](mailto:feedback@TalkingHandsTalkingFeet.com) – we will inform you when we publish your content.

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### SUMMARY

#### The benefits of this process:

- Bringing the arts into your classroom with music, lyrics, dance and grace.
- Deepening inside the valuable content of your curriculum.
- Children will remember this lesson for years to come.
- Teachers have something engaging, innovating and captivating to present.
- It's FUN for all!

**So give it a try, it is easier than you might think! You may discover all kinds of hidden talent in your classroom as a result.**



#### In a nutshell:

#### Constitution Lesson Plan in 5 steps

1. Listen to the song and follow along with the lyrics provided.
2. Sing along with the song (in various groupings) using the lyrics provided.
3. Take some time to open up these questions, the children will give their own examples that can be written on the board:
  - a. Who are “We the People”? (our true democracy)
  - b. What do we say no to? (our moral compass)
  - c. What are we free to do? (our rights)
4. Re-look at the lyrics of the song and have the children find movements that work with the song.

You can watch the YouTube video of “We the People” for ideas:  
Look up “*We the People*” Talking Hands Talking Feet on youtube.com
5. Sing the song again with the added movements.

8.

