

VOICES OF JUSTICE

Educator + Student Mini-Guides

D.C. History & Government Course Focus | Grades 9–12

Aligned to DC Social Studies Standards (OSSE), C3 Framework, and CCSS Literacy in History/Social Studies

Projects included:

1. 1) Voices of Justice: Who Gets to Decide?
2. 2) Voices of Justice: Rights at Street Level

Prepared for: Paul Laurence Dunbar High School – Eleanor Holmes Norton Law & Public Policy Academy

In partnership with: HumanitiesDC (Voices of Justice project)

Date: January 05, 2026

How to Use These Mini-Guides

Each project includes (1) an educator section with a ready-to-teach mini-sequence and facilitation notes and (2) student pages/handouts that can be printed as a packet. Both mini-guides are designed for 3–5 class periods (45–60 minutes each) and are built to support the high school District of Columbia History and Government course.

Core Learning Outcomes (Both Projects)

- Students explain how Washington, DC's unique governance (federal district, home rule, multiple jurisdictions) shapes decision-making and rights.
- Students evaluate contemporary DC issues using credible sources, multiple perspectives, and evidence-based reasoning.
- Students practice civil discourse and propose an informed action connected to a specific decision-maker in DC.

Standards alignment references the District of Columbia History and Government standards (DC. *) with an emphasis on Contemporary Washington, DC and self-determination, along with C3 inquiry indicators and CCSS literacy standards.

PROJECT 1 MINI-GUIDE

Voices of Justice: Who Gets to Decide?

This mini-guide uses the exhibit panels to help students examine how power works in Washington, DC: who has authority, how residents participate, and how DC's federal relationship shapes representation and policy. Students build a clear 'who decides' map for a current DC issue and develop an evidence-based claim through a seminar or debate.

Featured Exhibit Panels (1st Period)

- Access to Voice
- Voting and Representation
- Where Power Sits / How to Influence
- Home Rule and Congressional Riders
- Protest and Press

Standards Alignment (Project 1)

Framework	Standard(s)	How it shows up in this mini-guide
DC Social Studies (OSSE) – DC History & Government	DC.36, DC.37; DC.41–DC.44; DC.48–DC.51	Home Rule and statehood; federal–District relationship; DC government structure; pathways for influence; evaluating media; proposing solutions.
C3 Framework – Inquiry Arc & Civics	D1.1–D1.5; D2.Civ.1–D2.Civ.14; D3.1–D3.4; D4.1–D4.8	Develop questions, evaluate sources, argue with evidence, and take informed action about a DC governance issue.
CCSS Literacy in History/Social Studies (9–10 & 11–12)	RH.9–10.1, RH.9–10.2, RH.9–10.6, RH.9–10.7, RH.9–10.8; RH.11–12.1, RH.11–12.6, RH.11–12.7; WHST.9–10.1/2/7/8; WHST.11–12.1/2/7/8; SL.9–10.1; SL.11–12.1	Close reading, sourcing, media comparison, evidence-based writing/research, and structured discussion/debate.

Compelling Question

- Who gets to decide what happens in Washington, DC—and how can District residents (including young people) influence those decisions?

Supporting Questions

- How does DC's relationship to the federal government shape the rights and privileges of District residents?
- How is the DC government structured, and what roles do key officials and agencies play?
- What are the most effective ways residents influence local decisions (formal and informal)?
- How do we evaluate credibility in media claims about DC politics and community issues?

- What solution is realistic, legal, and connected to a decision-maker with authority?

Key Vocabulary

- Home Rule Act
- congressional review
- budget rider
- ward
- ANC
- testimony
- jurisdiction
- statehood
- stakeholders
- lateral reading

Educator Guide: 4-Day Mini-Sequence (Project 1)

Day	Learning Target	Core Experience	Product/Assessment
Day 1	I can explain DC's governance and identify where power sits for a current issue.	Gallery walk of panels + mini-lesson on DC government structure and federal oversight; students complete a 'Who Decides?' power map.	Power map + 3-2-1 exit ticket (3 takeaways, 2 questions, 1 connection).
Day 2	I can compare ways residents influence DC government and evaluate what access looks like in practice.	Close reading of Access/Voting/Influence panels; students categorize influence methods (testimony, elections, advocacy, organizing, media).	Influence method tracker + short reflection: Which method is most accessible for youth and why?
Day 3	I can evaluate the credibility of media claims about a DC issue using lateral reading.	Media credibility lab: students read 2-3 accounts of the same DC issue, check sources, and track perspective/bias/claims.	Credibility scorecard + annotated claim-evidence notes.
Day 4	I can make an evidence-based claim and propose an informed action connected to a specific decision-maker.	Socratic seminar or structured academic controversy; then students draft an action product (testimony, letter, op-ed, or infographic).	Final claim paragraph + action product (one-page).

Discussion Questions (Seminar/Debate)

- What does it mean to have a 'voice' in a democracy—and how does DC's status complicate that?
- Is formal participation (testimony, elections, meetings) more effective than protest and media? When and why?
- How should DC residents respond when local decisions are limited by federal oversight?
- What makes information about DC politics credible—and how can misinformation harm civic participation?
- Which decision-maker has authority over your issue, and what is your strongest evidence?

Curated Source List (Teacher Reference)

- OSSE DC Social Studies Standards – DC History & Government (DC. *)
- District of Columbia Home Rule Act (1973) – overview/excerpts
- Congressional review of DC legislation (overview/explainer)
- DC Council: how to submit testimony and track legislation (process overview)
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs): role and how to participate (overview)
- DC Statehood movement background (nonpartisan explainers)
- Project exhibit panels (Voices of Justice – Who Gets to Decide?)

Student Pages (Project 1): Who Gets to Decide?

A. Panel Evidence Tracker (Gallery Walk)

Panel	Key Idea (in my words)	Evidence (quote/paraphrase)	DC Government Connection (who decides + how to influence)
Access to Voice			
Voting & Representation			
Where Power Sits			
Home Rule & Riders			
Protest & Press			

B. 'Who Decides?' Power Map

Issue/topic: _____

Decision-makers with authority (name the office/agency): _____

How residents can influence (choose 2-3): _____

Evidence from panels/sources that supports your map: _____

One barrier to participation + one strategy to reduce it: _____

C. Media Credibility Scorecard (Lateral Reading)

- Directions: Compare two sources about the same DC issue.

Source	Claim(s) made	Evidence + credibility checks (who, why, where else?)	My evaluation (credible / mixed / not credible) + why
Source 1:			
Source 2:			

D. Informed Action Plan (One Page)

My claim (1-2 sentences): _____

Two pieces of evidence: 1) _____ 2) _____

My chosen action (testimony/letter/op-ed/infographic): _____

Audience/decision-maker: _____

Next steps (3): 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

What success looks like: _____

PROJECT 2 MINI-GUIDE

Voices of Justice: Rights at Street Level

This mini-guide uses the exhibit panels to explore how rights, safety, and accountability operate in DC’s real-world systems—schools, public space, policing, courts, and oversight. Students examine jurisdiction in DC (local and federal), learn how residents influence policy and oversight, and propose a youth-centered solution that strengthens rights and public safety.

Featured Exhibit Panels (4th Period)

- Fourth Amendment
- Fifth and Sixth Amendments
- Eighth Amendment
- Policy and Oversight
- Youth Voice
- Youth Participation and Leadership
- Jurisdiction and Home Rule

Standards Alignment (Project 2)

Framework	Standard(s)	How it shows up in this mini-guide
DC Social Studies (OSSE) – DC History & Government	DC.37; DC.41; DC.43–DC.44; DC.48–DC.51; (optional context: DC.38)	Home Rule authority; federal–District relationship; how residents influence policy; evaluating credibility; proposing solutions; grassroots organizing and civic power-building.
C3 Framework – Inquiry Arc & Informed Action	D1.1–D1.5; D2.Civ.4–D2.Civ.14; D3.1–D3.4; D4.1–D4.8	Analyze civic systems, evaluate evidence, deliberate about tradeoffs, and take informed action connected to a public institution.
CCSS Literacy in History/Social Studies (9–12)	RH.9–10.1, RH.9–10.4, RH.9–10.8; RH.11–12.1, RH.11–12.7, RH.11–12.8; WHST.9–10.1/4/7/8; WHST.11–12.1/4/7/8; SL.9–10.1; SL.11–12.1	Interpret legal/policy texts, evaluate claims, write arguments, conduct research, and participate in academic discussion.

Compelling Question

- How do rights work ‘at street level’ in Washington, DC—and what should DC institutions do when rights and safety collide?

Supporting Questions

- How do multiple jurisdictions in DC shape accountability and enforcement?
- What oversight structures exist in DC, and how do residents influence them?
- How do young people participate in policy decisions that affect their daily lives?
- How can we evaluate the credibility of claims about safety, policing, and rights in DC?
- What youth-informed solution is feasible within DC's governance structure?

Key Vocabulary

- jurisdiction
- oversight
- accountability
- home rule
- civil liberties
- public safety
- policy
- stakeholders
- community impact

Educator Guide: 4-Day Mini-Sequence (Project 2)

Day	Learning Target	Core Experience	Product/Assessment
Day 1	I can explain how jurisdiction works in DC and why it matters for accountability.	Panel analysis + DC jurisdiction map activity (local vs. federal vs. school-based authority); students build a 'who responds' flowchart for a scenario.	Jurisdiction flowchart + reflection: Where could accountability break down?
Day 2	I can connect rights issues to DC policy and oversight using evidence from panels and sources.	Small-group deep dive: Rights panels + Policy/Oversight panel; students identify the policy question and stakeholders.	Stakeholder map + evidence log.
Day 3	I can evaluate competing claims about safety and rights in DC using credible sources.	Media comparison + credibility check (lateral reading); students compare two accounts of a DC safety/rights issue.	Credibility scorecard + short written claim.
Day 4	I can propose a youth-centered solution that fits DC's governance and oversight pathways.	Students design an action product (oversight memo, youth training, community forum plan, PSA) tied to a DC decision-maker.	Final product + presentation (2 minutes) + self-reflection.

Discussion Questions (Seminar/Debate)

- How does DC's mix of local and federal authority affect community trust and accountability?
- What is the most effective form of oversight—and what evidence supports your view?
- What responsibilities do residents and institutions share in protecting rights and safety?
- What role should youth have in DC decision-making about safety and policy?
- Which solution best balances rights, safety, and feasibility in DC?

Curated Source List (Teacher Reference)

- OSSE DC Social Studies Standards – DC History & Government (DC. *)
- District of Columbia Home Rule Act (1973) – authority and limits (overview/excerpts)
- DC government structure and key public officials (official overviews)
- DC oversight and accountability bodies (official overviews; as relevant to class focus)
- Nonpartisan explainers on federal vs. local law enforcement presence in DC
- Project exhibit panels (Voices of Justice – Rights at Street Level)

Student Pages (Project 2): Rights at Street Level

A. Jurisdiction + Accountability Flowchart

Scenario (choose one from class): _____

Who has authority? (local/federal/school/other): _____

Who oversees the authority? _____

Where can residents influence? (testimony, oversight, media, organizing): _____

Evidence from panels/sources: _____

B. Stakeholder Map (Policy + Oversight)

Stakeholder	What they want/need	Power/role in DC system	What evidence supports this?

C. Credible Information Checklist (Lateral Reading)

Claim I'm investigating: _____

Source 1 + why it's credible (or not): _____

Source 2 + why it's credible (or not): _____

What perspectives are missing? _____

My conclusion (1-2 sentences): _____

D. Youth-Centered Solution Design

- Choose one: oversight memo, youth training plan, PSA, or community forum plan.

My product: _____

Decision-maker/audience: _____

Problem (DC-specific): _____

Proposed solution (specific + feasible): _____

Evidence I will use (2): _____

How we'll measure impact: _____