

FIFTH GRADE

Activity:	Expected duration:
Police experience spectrum activity	15 min
Learning goals:	
By the end of this lesson, students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulate their own personal experience with the police• Know how their perspective on policing differs from / is similar to that of their peers	
Guiding questions:	
What perspective is each student coming from in terms of policing? How can we have a productive political discussion while taking into account different base understandings of the role of police?	
Prep:	
Clear the classroom so that there is space for movement. Make two signs that say “Completely Agree” and “Completely Disagree” and put them up on either side of the classroom.	
Instructions:	

1. Establish that the activity of the day requires a safe space and the assumption of positive intent on the part of all students.
2. Explain to the students that today, you will be doing a spectrum activity about police. When you read a prompt out loud, students will have to find a place along the length of the classroom that represents how they feel about the prompt, ranging from “Completely Agree” on one side of the room to “Completely Disagree” on the other.

3. Sample prompts*:

I see police often in my neighborhood.

I would call 911 if I saw someone get robbed.

I know a police officer.

I have a police officer in my family.

I was taught that police officers are dangerous.

I think a lot of police officers are fat.

I would be scared if a police officer pulled my family’s car over.

I think police officers exist to protect us.

I want to become a police officer.

I know that the police are more likely to discriminate against me because of the color of my skin.

I feel more safe when I see that a police officer is nearby.

I have had a positive experience with the police in the past.

I have interacted with a police officer before.

I think that the work police officers do is heroic.

My parents talk to me about the police often.

I think it is a good thing that police officers carry guns.

4. For prompts where there is a large difference in response between class members, ask students to vocally respond to that difference. For prompts where there are significant outliers, ask those students to speak about why they’re standing apart from the herd.

*Feel free to use these prompts, tweak them to fit your students’ needs, or invent your own. It is likely that some prompts might be more impactful in a classroom that is predominantly filled with Black students, and others might be more appropriate for predominantly White classrooms; some might even be too complex to take on, depending on the maturity of your students. Make your decision based on your knowledge of your students.

Activity:	Expected duration:
Silent discussion of history of policing	45-50 min
Learning goals:	
<p>By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write down responses to a common text ● Engage in a silent discussion ● Transition to a vocal discussion 	
Guiding questions:	
How can we discuss policing while making sure every voice is heard?	
Prep:	
<p>On several large sheets of paper, write down prompts relating to policing. Then hang these sheets of paper up on the walls of the classroom. Make sure each student has a writing utensil. Sample prompts*:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">How is the history of police forces in the South different from the North?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What are some movements that the article mentions? What was the role of the police during those movements?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Historically, have the police always made the people they serve feel safe?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What is one fact that stuck with you from the article?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">What is one image from the article that stuck with you?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Did the article change how you feel about the police? Why or why not?</p> <p>*Feel free to use these prompts, tweak them to fit your students' needs, or invent your own. These prompts explicitly refer to the linked article, so if you want to use a different resource, make sure to modify them accordingly.</p>	
Instructions:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish that the activity of the day requires a safe space and the assumption of positive intent on the part of all students. 	

2. Have the students read the article "[History of Police in The U.S.](#)" by Frank Olito.
3. Explain to the students that you have put up prompts around the classroom to which they should respond via writing. It will be a "silent discussion," so that all the voices in the room carry the same weight. Each student should attempt to write at least one thing on each large sheet of paper, and they can feel free to respond to other students' points by drawing arrows to connect their comments visually.
4. Give them 20 minutes to walk around the classroom and respond to the prompts.
5. After they've had enough time to respond, ask everyone to stand near the prompt that interested them the most. The students should be in small groups; ask some students if they are willing to move if there are prompts with only a few people standing by them. Each small group should read all the comments on their chosen prompt and discuss.
6. Next, ask one representative from each group to share with the class what they discussed, what problems came up in their discussion, and points of disagreement between commenters.