

PATIENCE LEARNING · FREE 1-DAY CASE

Four Good Causes

A free single-session case from the world of **The Budget**, the 11-day civics & economics simulation.

GRADE 7 · SOCIAL STUDIES (CIVICS, BUDGETING & COST-PER-PERSON) · ~45 MIN · 1 CLASS PERIOD

Your students are budget analysts for a town with \$600,000 and four worthy projects that add up to far more. Every proposal comes with a moving story. Some also come with numbers. There is no way to fund them all — only a defensible way to choose.

TEACHER QUICK-START

Objective: Students allocate a fixed budget among competing proposals, compute cost-per-person served, and weigh emotional testimony against evidence — building a defensible recommendation where no option is free of trade-offs.

Standards tie-in: C3 Framework D2.Civ.6 & D2.Eco.1–2 (public decisions, scarcity, cost/benefit) and evidence-based argument (D4.1); CCSS 7 quantitative reasoning (unit rates).

What you need: Just this packet. Print the student pages (works individually or in teams of 3–4). Calculators optional. No prep.

- 1. Set the scene (5 min).** “You have \$600,000. Four good projects want \$1,000,000 total. You have to choose — and defend it.”
- 2. Read the proposals (8 min).** Teams read the four projects, their costs, and who they serve.
- 3. Compute & decide (20 min).** Find cost-per-person, then build a budget that fits \$600,000.
- 4. The reveal (8 min).** Walk the answer key. The point: testimony moves you; cost-per-person shows you what your money actually does.
- 5. Reflection (4 min).** Each student answers the reflection question.

The Town Ledger

You are a junior budget analyst for the town of Edgewater. The council has **\$600,000** for community improvements. Four projects applied, asking for **\$1,000,000** together. You can't fund them all. Each comes with a story — and some come with numbers.

THE FOUR PROPOSALS

Project	Cost	People served / year	Cost per person
Health Clinic	\$250,000	3,000 visits	you compute
Safe Walking Routes	\$150,000	800 kids	you compute
Youth Center	\$400,000	120 kids	you compute
Park Fountain	\$200,000	light use	—

THE STORIES IN THE ROOM

The Youth Center has the most moving testimony — a student spoke in tears about needing “somewhere to go,” and the room applauded. The Park Fountain has a lovely rendering everyone likes. The Clinic and Safe Routes came with binders of data and no tears.

Your Call (Decision Sheet)

Team name: _____ Period: _____

Step 1 — Cost per person (cost ÷ people served, rounded):

Clinic: $\$250,000 \div 3,000 = \$$ _____ Safe Routes: $\$150,000 \div 800 = \$$ _____ Youth Center: $\$400,000 \div 120 = \$$ _____

Step 2 — The surprise. The Youth Center has the most moving testimony. What is its cost per person, and how does that compare to the Clinic and Safe Routes?

Step 3 — Build a budget. Pick projects that TOTAL \$600,000 or less. Write your combination and the total:

My budget: _____ Total: \$_____

Step 4 — Defend it. There's no single right answer here — but there is a defensible one. Explain how you used cost-per-person AND the testimony to decide, and name the trade-off you accepted:

ANSWER KEY (for the reveal)

Step 1 — Cost per person:

Clinic $\approx 250,000 \div 3,000 = \83 . Safe Routes = $150,000 \div 800 = \$188$. Youth Center = $400,000 \div 120 = \$3,333$.

Step 2 — The surprise:

The Youth Center — the most emotional pitch — costs **\$3,333 per person**, about 40× the Clinic (\$83) and 18× Safe Routes (\$188). The testimony is real and moving; the cost-per-person is also real, and it's very high.

Step 3 — A budget that fits (examples):

Clinic (\$250k) + Safe Routes (\$150k) + Park Fountain (\$200k) = **\$600,000** exactly. Or Clinic + Safe Routes + hold \$200k in reserve. Funding the Youth Center (\$400k) alone eats two-thirds of the budget for 120 people, leaving little for the 3,800 the Clinic + Safe Routes reach.

Step 4 — What a strong answer does:

There's no single correct budget — this is a real trade-off. A strong answer uses the cost-per-person numbers to justify funding the Clinic and Safe Routes (huge reach per dollar), makes an honest call on the Youth Center (name the trade-off: real need vs. very high cost), and doesn't pretend the emotional pitch away — it weighs it against the data instead of being ruled by it.

The big idea:

Testimony tells you a need is real; cost-per-person tells you what your money actually does. Good civic decisions hold both — feeling the story AND checking the number — instead of letting the loudest applause spend the whole budget.

REFLECTION (graded on thinking, not the “right” answer)

“The Youth Center got the applause. How did you weigh that real need against a cost-per-person 40 times higher than the Clinic's?”

SCORING THE THINKING

	3 — Strong	2 — Developing	1 — Beginning
Computes rates	All cost-per-person correct	Some correct	Not computed
Data + testimony	Weighs both, not just one	Uses one	Rules by applause
Budget fits \$600k	Valid combo, totals $\leq$ \$600k	Close/minor error	Doesn't fit
Owns the trade-off	Names what was given up	Hints at it	Ignores it

READY FOR THE FULL SIMULATION?

This was one budget. The Budget is eleven days of hard choices.

In the full 11-day simulation, each student is a junior budget analyst for the town of Edgewater, allocating a community fund among competing proposals that each arrive with a moving testimony and evidence that both supports and undercuts it. Students seal an early budget, then meet data that complicates it. Graded on reasoning, never on a “right” allocation.

THE BUDGET · GRADE 7 SOCIAL STUDIES · \$39 · patiencelearning.com/simulations

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