

FUN, GAMES, & OTHER LEARNING



Archimedes's Principles

START
HERE

Archimedes believed that he could move the world if he knew the right place to place his lever. Where's the right place to put a lever to change your community? Pick an issue that the class wants to see changed. Where might they gain the most leverage? With some "power" in the community? Unfortunately, power often deals only with power. How will the class get sufficient power to get a hearing and then to bring about the required change?

Examples:

(1) **The power of a group.** This can be measured through a petition, collective letters, presence at meetings, phone calls, press conferences.

(2) **The power of homework.** Is this a new issue or old issue in the community? Have similar issues been handled differently in the past? Checking city hall and other public records, plus going through back issues of your local newspaper (online or at the library) may reveal answers (like issues and responses, allies, or funding possibilities). Change usually requires some funding, and tight budgets are an all-too-easy reason for being turned down.

(3) **The power of youth.** Youth in action attracts the media. Use this to support your position. Get fellow students in other schools behind the issue. Wash cars, raise funds, be visible in the community. Your actions may attract the help of adults who have resources and contacts.

(4) **The power of words and ideas.** The hammering out of ideas gives those ideas eloquence and is often a way to shape issues, to give impetus to change, or to change people's minds. Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Winston Churchill are classic examples of leaders who used the power of words—arguments well wrought—to move a nation. This still works today. Have the class try to find those expressive words, not slogans or ad headlines, but rational arguments that are memorable and quotable. A motivating issue often helps even the worst writers find their voices.

One Thing

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Where should you exercise your leverage? Where it can make a difference about something that matters.

What one thing would make the greatest difference in your community?

List some options on the board:

- a top-ranked school system
- a cultural center
- improved parks and recreation
- more jobs
- new businesses
- redevelopment of downtown
- better social services for the poor and homeless
- a community college
- municipal transit system
- hospital and health care facilities

Ask students to choose one option (or propose one of their own). Ask the class, in groups, to argue their case: that their proposal would make the most profound change in your community.

Trust Cards

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Trust is powerful leverage, but it's difficult to create. It can take years to earn trust, and it can be broken by a single thoughtless act.

Divide your class into four "lending circles," each with at least four members. Give each group six trust cards, which can be cashed in for favors from other members of the group, no questions asked. Each group has to decide what the favors can be. Will they be limited to small favors like holding a place for someone in the cafeteria line? Or will they honor large favors that may require hours of labor? How will the group divvy out the trust cards? Does each member get a card or earn a card? Will there be time limits on using the trust card? Do those who do a favor then earn the right to pick a card from the group's trust bank? Members of a group can save trust cards up for an occasion, but if they keep the cards out of circulation too long, the favors expire just as they would in real life.

As each group sorts out the lines of trust and discipline of the group, they will get a feel for the nature and operations of a lending circle.