



WYOMING'S LEGISLATORS BACK TO SCHOOL PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	AGE	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION
Legislative Simulation	High School or Middle School	This activity requires advance planning and coordination with the classroom teacher. Ask the teacher to work with the class in advance of your visit to choose a public policy issue of importance to the students and to prepare a simple, one-sentence proposal to solve the problem. On your day in the classroom, ask several students to form a "committee" to hold public hearings on the proposal. Have other students present brief "testimony" for and against the proposal. Then have the committee members debate the proposal and make a recommendation on the proposal to the full class. Finally, have the full class debate and vote on the proposal. At the conclusion of the simulation, discuss how this exercise relates to the process of dealing with competing interests, negotiating, compromising and decision making that you experience in legislative life.
Solving a class problem	All grade levels	Ask the students to pretend that they can have a field day to go anywhere that their entire class can agree on. Divide the class into three approximately equal size groups that want to do three different things (e.g. go to the mall, go swimming, go to a ball game). Ask them to resolve the disagreement and come to a class consensus. Assist them in negotiating, compromising and reaching a decision. At the conclusion, discuss how this exercise relates to the process of dealing with competing interests, negotiating, compromising and decision making that you experience in legislative life.
A day in the life of a legislator	All grade levels	Select a page from a legislative day on your personal calendar (if possible, enlarge the page on an overhead slide) and go over that day with the class. A well-selected day would allow you to illustrate such things as dealing with constituent problems, listening to diverse points of view on a difficult issue, negotiating, compromising, decision-making and balancing your personal and professional life with legislative life. You could start the session by asking the students what they do in a typical day. Consider bringing along your spouse or children to talk about what it's like to be part of a legislator's family.
The perfect chocolate chip cookie (perfect pizza, perfect school lunch, etc.)	Elementary School	Ask the students to decide as a class how they will make a batch of chocolate chip cookies to take home to their families. Begin by asking what makes a perfect chocolate chip cookie. When they are unable to agree, lead them through a process of deciding on nuts or no nuts, many or few chips, soft or chewy, thick or thin, etc. At the conclusion, discuss how this exercise relates to the process of dealing with competing interests, negotiating, compromising and decision making that you experience in legislative life.

– MORE IDEAS ON BACK OF PAGE –

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Debate real or mock legislation	All grade levels	Consider bringing copies of real legislation for students to debate during your classroom visit. Recent legislation that may be of interest to students includes bills relating to graduated drivers licenses and others related to graduation requirements. You can also ask the Legislative Information Officer to develop “mock” bills for younger students that simplify the lawmaking process on topics that are fun to debate, such as banning hot dogs in the lunchroom.
Debate topics	All grade levels	Legislators can bring policymaking to life for students by explaining that the issues that state legislatures deal with are critical ones for people of all ages, including students. Some examples of the many things that the legislature decides that affect students that you may want to discuss with students include: length of the school year; requirements for driver’s licenses; drinking age; seat belt safety requirements; student testing requirements; penalties for criminal behavior; funding for schools; graduation requirements; school uniforms, school violence; helmets for bicyclists or roller bladders; video game restrictions; smoking on campus; graffiti; and curfews.
Legislative appropriations committee simulation	High School	The instructions and handouts for this simulation are available on the Wyoming’s Legislators Back to School Web site or in hard copy from the Legislative Information Officer at the Legislative Service Office. In this simulation, you will divide the students into four groups to reflect four subcommittees (Health, Education, Welfare, Homeland Security). Give a student handout to each group and ask them to decide on a position to be reported back to the full committee. Reconvene the appropriations committee and conduct a hearing, drawing out the differing positions and values. Guide the committee to a vote on a balanced budget. Debrief the committee session by using the suggested questions on page five of the lesson and by relating the simulation to what you have personally experienced in the legislature.
Appreciating Democracy Appreciating Representation	High School	The instructions and handouts for these lesson plans are available on the Wyoming’s Legislators Back to School Web site under Teacher Resources or in hard copy from the Legislative Information Officer at the Legislative Service Office. These lessons are designed to teach students to appreciate the most basic practices of democracy through hands-on activities.
“Check Out My Wheels” lesson plan	Elementary School	This fun lesson plan asks students to consider the various types of “wheeled” transportation that kids and adults may use and the safety considerations related to the use of these “vehicles.” This lesson plan is available from the Legislative Information Officer at the Wyoming Legislative Service Office.
Reality Check: Key	High School and Middle School	This 16-minute video (in VHS or DVD format), for middle and high school students, tells the story of 5 individuals – Sean Duffy from MTV’s Real World Boston and four of his friends – who go to the state capitol, and find out what really happens when state lawmakers go into session and get down to business.
Your Ideas Count Video	High School and Middle School	This 16-minute video (in VHS or DVD format), for middle and high school students, tells the story of 5 individuals – Sean Duffy from MTV’s Real World Boston and four of his friends – who go to the state capitol, and find out what really happens when state lawmakers go into session and get down to business.
Citizen Brain Video	Elementary School	This 16-minute video (in VHS or DVD format) shows upper elementary students how their brains can thrive on American Democracy, through the animated “Citizen Brain” who is starving for knowledge.

Information provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures’ Trust for Representative Democracy.