

How a Bill Becomes a Law – Middle School

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Grade Level Expectation:

Understands and analyzes the structure and powers of government at the national level.

Vocabulary:

1. Senator
2. Representative
3. Bill

Objective:

Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the process of passing a bill into law.

Assessment:

Students will demonstrate their understanding of how a bill becomes a law by writing out the process without any prompts.

Before:

Introduce vocabulary – have quick vocabulary games throughout the lessons to help reinforce term meanings.

During:

1. Walk students through steps by displacing pictures for each step on a poster / board.
2. Break students up into small groups (3-4) students. Give them little pictures and have them retell each other the steps as they display the mini pictures.
 - Each day review process using pictures for quick review.
3. In partners, research current bills via the internet and local reps/senators homepages (students can come up with their own idea if nothing is available – subject to teacher approval).
 - Research issue – need supporting info for both sides of the issue (research skills may need to be revisited at this point.)
 - Each team write up a bill
 - Divide students into House and Senate, Democrats and Republicans, use student numbers to approximate actual percentages – Reps vs. Senator.
 - Note: Elect/choose a President of Senate or Speaker of the House
 - Students will read their bill to the House/Senate they belong to. (1st Reading).
 - Teacher will facilitate Committees to read over bill – use this for revision/editing. Students can now do amendments or changes. Now do a 2nd Reading with House/Senate.
 - At this point have a mock hearing. Bring in elected officials to help play roles.
 - Now students can do a 3rd Reading. House/Senate will vote on the bill. If passed, the bill will be given to the opposite chamber to be voted on - due to time constraints the other house will just vote (not go through entire process).
 - When the bill has passed both houses with a 2/3 majority, it will be passed to the “Governor” to be approved or vetoed.

Note: Have the school Principal play the part of the Governor. S/he will read the bill and take appropriate action. If passed, Governor will give the pen used for signing to the bill’s sponsor as a memento.

After:

Students will write an essay describing the process of a bill becoming a law.

Extension:

- A. Can use this info to write a persuasive paper
 - Can show good cause, common good, and individual right
 - Write the bill – use this for writing to a specific audience, voice, or word choice

- Use this also for the writing process: pre-write, edit, revise, etc