

Lesson Plan 1: Making Public Policy

(can be adapted to all age levels)

Summary: Member comes to the classroom for a 50-55 minute class and engages students in a discussion of how legislators make public policy.

Teacher Preparation: Students look at the Legislative website to view the biography of the member and a map with the state legislative districts. Other materials are also available:
www.leg.wa.gov/legislature

Agenda for class period:

2 minutes Transition students.

5 minutes Member introduces him/herself and explains (important to keep this brief to keep students' attention):

- Name and title (may need to explain in more detail to younger children)
- Some personal background - school attended, favorite subjects, current non-legislative employment, etc.
- History including how and why he/she was drawn to public service and the Legislature.

20 minutes Member asks students a question to gauge their level of knowledge and interest (opportunity to explain that this is a state issue, and/or civics at work, and to engage them). Possible topics:

- "How many of you know about/support the graduated driver's license program?"
- "Should public school students wear uniforms?"
- "Should pocket bikes/motorized scooters be legal?"
- "Should youth be tried as adults for certain crimes?"
- "Should the state regulate foods sold in student stores or in vending machines?"

OR

Member gives the history of a bill that would be of interest to the students and asks them to come up with the pros and cons of the bill. Facilitate and encourage the students in debate. Explain consensus and compromise as part of the member's job.

OR

Member says: "Have you ever thought there 'oughta be a law' on some topic? What should it be?" (This is to use their own personal interests to engage them.) Facilitate and encourage the students in debate.

20 minutes Member encourages general questions and comments.

Assessment:

Ask students to write down two things they learned from the visit that they did not know before.

Back to School Program Goals:

- Teach students what it's like to be a state legislator: the debate, negotiation, and compromise that are necessary in developing public policy.
- Let students know that their ideas count.

Tips for Talking with Students:

- Try to let as many of the students talk as possible.
- Use personal stories to engage the students.
- Let the students know how to contact you.