



Make *Your* Voice Heard

A lesson plan provided by the office of the Indiana Secretary of State
IndianaCivics.com

Make Your Voice Heard

Objectives:

For students to gain and understanding of who their elected officials are and in what capacity they serve through taking a position on and exploring an issue that affects their lives.

Standards

Civics and Government

- 4.2.4 – Identify major state offices, the duties and powers associated with them, and how they are chosen, such as by election or appointment.
- 4.2.7 – Use a variety of resources to take a position or recommend a course of action on a public issue relating to Indiana’s past or present.

English/Language Arts

- 4.RV.1 – Build and use accurately general academic and content-specific words and phrases
- 4.W.3.1 – Write persuasive compositions in a variety of forms that –
 - in an introductory statement, clearly state an opinion to a particular audience
 - support the opinion with facts and details from various sources, including texts
 - use an organizational structure to group related idea that support the purpose
 - connect opinion and reasons using words and phrases
 - provide a conclusion statement or section related to the position presented
- 4.W.4 – Apply the writing process to –
 - Generate a draft by developing, selecting and organizing ideas relevant to topic, purpose, and genre; revise to improve writing, using appropriate reference materials (e.g., quality of ideas, organization, sentence fluency, word choice); edit writing format and conventions (e.g. spelling, capitalizations, usage, punctuation).
 - Use technology to interact and collaborate with others to publish legible documents.

Time Required:

Approximately 1-2 hours or one class session

Recommended Grade Level:

The learning objectives are aligned with 4th grade standards but the lesson could also be adapted to other grades levels and standards. The research portion of the lesson could potentially be expanded in order to conform to secondary school academic standards.

Materials Needed:

- Internet access - needed so students can make use of the “Who Are Your Elected Officials” webpage. If time is an issue or students will not have internet access, the educator can use the school’s address in the system and provide printouts of the relevant local and state officials. A handout detailing the 7 statewide elected officials and their addresses is also included at the end of this lesson plan.
- An envelope, stamp, paper and pencil (if student will not be typing the letter) for each student
- A copy of the prompt for each student
- Copy of argument diagram for each student (found on last page of lesson plan)

Directives:

1. Introduction: Start by reviewing or introducing the students to the idea that elected officials represent them and their interests. These officials are elected by voters, such as their parents, who entrust them to make important decisions on everything from which roads will be repaved to writing the laws that govern our society.
2. Brainstorm: As a class brainstorm topics/issues that affect students’ lives. These may be changes they would like to see in the state, their community, or even their neighborhood. Students could also write to an elected official in defense of a current policy that they believe is effective.
3. Choose a Focus: Once the students have come up with several good ideas, it is time for them to select a topic of focus for their letter. A student is free to select a topic that was not discussed with the class as a whole as long as it is an issue an elected official could potentially have sway over.
4. Who Are Your Elected Officials?: Students will now use the [Who Are Your Elected Officials](#) website to look up their current representatives. They can do so by entering in their home address or the address of the school. Once they have done so, the site will display elected officials under the headings: Federal, State, County, Township and School. Alternatively, you may provide the students with a list of those individuals that represent the school’s address furnished from the website. A handout of Indiana’s statewide elected officials and their addresses is included at the end of this lesson plan. Make sure the students follow the link provided to the chosen official’s webpage. From here, they can write down the office address as well as the name and position of the official. Students are encouraged to contact the office of the Indiana Secretary of State.
Who Are Your Elected Officials Website: <http://wayeo.egis.39dn.com/#>
5. Diagram the Argument: Have students complete the argument diagram in order to organize their ideas. The diagram is included at the end of this lesson plan.
6. Put Pen to Paper: Once students have successfully completed their sketch, it is time to put pen to paper. Provide students with access to either a computer and printer or pen/pencil and paper in order to write their letter. If the students will be sending their letters, please also provide an envelope and stamp or ask students to bring these items to class.

Make Your Voice Heard

In today's lesson you will be writing a letter to a politician in order to express your thoughts, ideas and suggestions on an issue that affects you.

Step 1: Brainstorm ideas for potential letter topics with your classmates.

- Potential topics should affect your life
- Think of topics that politicians will be able to affect

Step 2: Choose a topic that is the most interesting to you

Step 3: Look up the appropriate politician to send your letter to. Make sure you write down their position and their address

Step 4: Organize you're your persuasive letter using the diagram handout

Step 5: Write your persuasive letter. Make sure you follow the sketch you make in step 4.

Step 6: Send your letter!

Step 7: Wait for a reply

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