

Lesson Title: Making Public Policy (Laws) in New York State

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Lesson Outcomes:

- Identify problems in their school environments and design solutions (policies) to those problems
- Illustrate the Public Policy process of New York State
- Examine current bills in the New York State Assembly and construct a Bill Summary using the New York State Assembly Database
- Critique the bills selected by their classmates, debate their pros and cons with their classmates, and ultimately chose whether or not to oppose or support the bill

Alignment to New York State Framework:

12.G1b The Constitution created a unique political system that distributes powers and responsibilities among three different branches of government at the federal level and between state and federal governments. State constitutions address similar structures and responsibilities for their localities.

12.G5 PUBLIC POLICY: All levels of government—local, state, and federal—are involved in shaping public policy and responding to public policy issues, all of which influence our lives beyond what appears in the Constitution. Engaged citizens understand how to find, monitor, evaluate, and respond to information on public policy issues.

12.G5a Each level of government has its own process of shaping, implementing, amending and enforcing public policy. Customarily the executive branch will outline its plan and agenda in an executive address to the legislative body.

12.G5b On various issues, certain governmental branches and agencies are responsible for determining policy. Those who create public policies attempt to balance regional and national needs, existing political positions and loyalties, and sources of political power.

Alignment to New York State Social Studies Practices:

F. Civic Participation

1. Demonstrate respect for the rights of others in discussions and classroom debates; respectfully disagree with other viewpoints and provide evidence for a counter-argument.
2. Participate in activities that focus on a classroom, school, community, state, or national issue or problem.
5. Participate in persuading, debating, negotiating, and compromising in the resolution of conflicts and differences.

8. Fulfill social and political responsibilities associated with citizenship in a democratic society and interdependent global community by developing awareness of an/or engaging in the political process.

Lesson Procedures and Materials:

Materials:

- Appendix A: “Making Public Policy (Laws) in New York State” worksheet
- Separate copy of Committee’s Choice page from “Making Public Policy” worksheet for each Committee
- “Making Public Policy (Laws) in New York State” - ([Google Slides presentation](#))
- Access to the Internet

Procedures:

Part I:

1. Anticipatory Set:

- Have students work with a partner to identify two problems they would like to see fixed at their school. (You can project this and record their answers for the class to see or they can do this independently.)
- Ask students to generate solutions (which may include rules) the school could put in place to fix their problems.
- Come back together as a whole class and have students who want to volunteer share their problems and solutions. When a student finishes telling the class, take a vote and see who would support this proposed solution and who would not.
- Wrap up the Anticipatory Set by telling the students that while schools may not allow students to vote on proposed solutions, our Local, State and Federal governments do propose solutions and vote the ones with major support into law. Explain that this lesson will focus on how the New York State Assembly process works to make laws.

2. Opening Guided Notes:

- Use the Google Slides presentation “Making Public Policy (Laws) in New York State” to help students fill out the worksheet while learning the background on how a bill becomes a law in New York State.

3. Bill Summaries:

- Using the website <http://nyassembly.gov/leg/>, students will research a bill that interests them.
 - Fill in and number from 1 to 11000. They should do this until they find a Bill that interests them.
 - When they find that bill they should click on the number link and then click on “Summary”, “Actions” and “Memo.”

- Use the information to fill out the 1st Bill Summary on the worksheet. When they have finished they should find 2 more bills they are interested in and continue to complete the worksheet.
- After about 5 to 10 minutes, project the New York State Legislative Process Chart (slide 12 in the presentation) on the board and have the students try to answer the follow-up questions for their bills. (If students are moving at a slower pace - only have them complete two Bill Summaries).
- When most of the class has finished, have the students choose their favorite bill out of their three.
- To wrap up, ask for two or three volunteers to share their answers.

IV. Committee Process Simulation

- Split the students up into 4 or 5 groups and have them push their chairs together into a group.
- Tell the students they are now Assemblymen and Assemblywomen attending a Committee meeting.
- Have each group choose a Committee Chairman. The members of the Committee should hand their worksheets to the Chairman. The Chairman will read the bill summary that each Committee member has circled as his or her favorite.
- After each bill is read, the Committee will discuss the bill and evaluate it (is it a big/significant enough problem? Is the solution feasible? Will the solution be expensive? What are the pros and cons? Etc.)
- The Committee will be allowed to vote only one bill out of Committee (and on to the next step - the Floor of the Assembly). This step emulates a real Assembly Committee where most Bills never make it out of the Committee and onto the Floor. Have students decide which bill will go forward.
- Collect each Committee's recommended bill, as it will be used during the part of the lesson.

Part II:

1. Review the Lawmaking process: *Legislative Branch (Assembly, Senate) and then Signed by Gov.; In the Assembly and Senate (Step 1: Bill Introduction; Step 2: Committee Process; Step 3: Floor Debate and Vote)*
2. Conduct an Assembly Floor Debate and Vote

Roles	Classroom Setup	Technology
<p><u>Teacher:</u> Assembly Speaker</p> <p><u>Students:</u> Assemblymen and Assemblywomen</p>	<p>Assembly Speaker should be at the front of the room with Students (members of the Assembly) facing them. When students rise to speak they should stand at their desk.</p> <p>See Assembly Floor Layout Photo: https://auburnpub.com/news/local/state-and-regional/former-ny-assembly-ethics-official-job-was-waste-of-money/article_cbfc7318-b814-11e7-914a-7f0be41b7389.html</p>	<p>It is encouraged, but not mandatory that students be allowed to use computers or phones at their desks to access information for the debate/vote.</p>

- The students should be told at the beginning of this part of the lesson that they are still Assemblyman and Assembly women, but are now on the Floor of the Assembly debating Bills and taking a vote either pass them through or vote them down.
- Students whose bill was passed out Committee in the first 40 minutes of the lesson will act as the Sponsors of the Bills in this Simulation. They will be recognized by the Speaker (the Teacher) as the Sponsor and will explain the purpose of the Bill.
- When the Sponsor is done giving the purpose explanation, the other students (members of the Assembly) can do three things prior to the class vote on the Bill. Students may:

Rise to Question	<p>Members of the Assembly raise hands and when recognized by the Assembly Speaker, they may rise and ask a question of the Bill’s sponsor (how much would this cost?; what interest groups oppose this bill?; Has this been tried in any other states or countries?)</p> <p>Usually during the discussion of the first bill, teachers may have to give students some time to think of questions. Usually the more questions the better quality the discussion that follows. The Sponsors should try to answer the questions as best they can realizing they don’t have all the information (they may take guesses).</p>
Rise to Support	<p>Members of the Assembly raise hands and when recognized by the Assembly Speaker may rise and ask their Assembly colleagues to support this bill and then give brief arguments supporting their opinion.</p>
Rise to Oppose	<p>Members of the Assembly raise hands and when recognized by the Assembly Speaker may rise and ask their Assembly colleagues to oppose this bill and then give brief arguments supporting their opinion.</p>

4. When the class is done debating the bill, the Speaker will call for a vote. If one more than half of the class votes yes, the bill passes the Assembly floor vote.

Check for Understanding:

Assess students’ ability to read a Bill Summary. Distribute a sample that you have written or a real Bill Summary to students. Assess their ability to respond to these questions:

- What Chamber of the New York State Legislature is this Bill in?
- Who is the bill’s Sponsor?

- What is the purpose of this bill?
- Where in the Legislative Process is this bill currently?
- What steps would this bill need to pass through in order to become a law in New York State?

Extensions:

1. Replace the assigned bills given in this simulation by asking students to pick issues they believe could be fixed using the New York State Public Policy Process. Students would use media reports or their first-hand knowledge of issues in New York state to pick a topic they think needs to be fixed.

In a research project, students would use trusted resources to find arguments and facts to support to answer questions like:

- Describe societal problem
 - State the reason(s) this issue is a societal problem within the district, town, state, country, etc.
 - State what groups are most affected by this societal problem
 - Provide evidence of the problem (statistics, etc.)
 - Provide some historical background as to when this issue became a real matter of public concern.
 - Consider what triggered this issue to become a topic of public debate (What has made this an important issue?)
 - Is there a current **New York State** law, policy, ruling, or judicial precedent that is related to this issue?
 - Come up with a policy that will reduce the problem. The policy statement should be original and clearly and concisely written (write the new law or policy that you are proposing below).
 - Consider the costs and benefits of your policy. (Pros and Cons)
 - List the Pros (Reasons people/groups should support your policy) and Cons (Reasons people/groups might be against your policy)
 - Discuss why you think your policy will be effective (why it will solve the problem) and feasible (Is a solution our government could actually do – it's not just a dream scenario).
2. Students would create a Bill summary (like the one on the How a Bill Becomes a Law Worksheet) and introduce the Bill into the Assembly (Step 1). The simulation would then continue with Steps 2: Assembly Committee Process and Step 3: Floor Discussion and Floor Vote.

Making Public Policy (Laws) in New York State

Anticipatory Set:

Step 1: What Two Issues/Problems would you and your partner like to see fixed in your school?

Step 2: What are Solutions for your Issues/Problems that you would like to see the people who run your school put into place?

Issue (problem) you would like fixed at School	Your Solution to this Issue or Problem would be?
1.	
2.	

Introduction: How a Bill Becomes a Law

Directions: Fill in the blanks below from the presentation

A. For 6 months each year, _____ Branch and the _____ Branch meet in _____ to propose ideas/solutions (_____) to problems and pass the ones most supported into New York State _____.

B. The head of the Executive Branch is the _____. His role in our state is similar to the _____ in our Federal Government.

C. The New York Legislative Branch has two chambers. The New York State _____ and the New York State _____.

D. There are 150 members in the _____ and 63 in the _____.

E. In order for a bill (idea or solution) to become law it must be passed in both the _____ and the _____ and then be signed into law by the _____.

Draw a diagram below that represents steps in the New York State lawmaking process below:

How is this an example of checks and balances?

How does this process make sure the citizens of New York have a say in the Public Policy (lawmaking) process?

There are three steps a Bill (idea) must go through to pass through both the Senate and Assembly on its way to the Governor for Signature.

Assembly	Senate
1. Bill Introduction	1. Bill Introduction
2. Committee Process	2. Committee Process
3. Floor Vote/Debate	3. Floor Vote/Debate

Bill Summaries: <http://nyassembly.gov/leg/>

<p style="text-align: center;">Bill Summary 1</p> <p>Bill #: A. _____ Sponsor: Co-Sponsors: Actions:</p> <p>Summary (Describe in a paragraph what the purpose of the bill is and what problem is it seeking to solve):</p>	<p><u>Follow-up questions:</u> 1. Where in the Legislative Process is this bill currently? 2. What steps does it still have to take to become a law in New York State?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bill Summary 2</p> <p>Bill #: A. _____ Sponsor: Co-Sponsors: Actions:</p> <p>Summary (Describe in a paragraph what the purpose of the bill is and what problem is it seeking to solve):</p>	<p><u>Follow-up questions:</u> 1. Where in the Legislative Process is this bill currently? 2. What steps does it still have to take to become a law in New York State?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bill Summary 3</p> <p>Bill #: A. _____ Sponsor: Co-Sponsors: Actions:</p> <p>Summary (Describe in a paragraph what the purpose of the bill is and what problem is it seeking to solve):</p>	<p><u>Follow-up questions:</u> 1. Where in the Legislative Process is this bill currently? 2. What steps does it still have to take to become a law in New York State?</p>

Committee's Choice

Bill Summary

Bill #: A. _____

Sponsor:

Co-Sponsors:

Actions:

Summary (Describe in a paragraph what the purpose of the bill is and what problem is it seeking to solve):

Reason why it was chosen by the Committee: