

Lesson Plan: Student Leadership Program (First Literacy)

March 21, 2019

Objective: Students will draft sample email templates in order to educate and assist their peers in contacting their state representatives by hosting letter-writing stations.

Pre-survey:

Students rate their level of comfort with the idea of interacting with state legislators.

Vocabulary:

Constituent – a voting member of a community

Lawmakers – Members of the Senate or the House of Representatives

Express my concern – Show how you think and feel about an issue

Issue – An important topic or problem

Credentials – Information about who you are and what you do

Teaching:

- Overview of local government:
 - o The state of Massachusetts has a House of Representatives and a Senate. These groups are responsible for making new laws, and amending (changing) old laws.
 - o Massachusetts is split into districts; each district has a senator and a representative. YOUR senator and representatives depend on where you live.
- How to find your state representatives:
 - o Model a search by navigating to <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>.
 - o Use Burlington address – 01803
 - o Have students find their legislators
- Ways to contact legislators
 - o Over the phone
 - o In writing – snail mail
 - o Email
- Today, we'll focus on email, because it's the fastest way to communicate – and it's not as stressful as talking on the phone!

How to write an email to your legislator:

- Open with Dear [Title] [Name]:
- Introduce yourself with your name and your district/town.

- Explain the reason for the email:
 - o "I am writing to express my concern about _____."
 - o "I am writing to share my views about _____."
 - o "I would like to ask for your support on the issue of _____."
- Explain the importance of the issue:
 - o "This issue is important to me because _____."
 - o "This affects my community because _____."
- Request action
 - o "For this reason, I would like to ask you to support the bill to _____."
 - o "Please support the _____ bill."
- Express thanks:
 - o "Thank you for your time."
- Sign your email:
 - o Name
 - o Title/credentials
 - o Address
 - o Phone number

Student Work:

- Students work in pairs to write emails to a senator or representative.
- Using GoogleDocs, students work in groups to draft an email template that can be filled in by classmates.
- They also create a plan for setting up letter-writing stations during class time.

Post-Survey:

Students rate their level of comfort with the idea of interacting with state legislators.

Reflection:

Our group today was small but mighty – four students from our Level 1 Class. Adalidia (Guatemala), Ivane (Brazil), Ety (Brazil), and Diaka (Guinea) participated. I conducted the pre- and post- surveys orally, inviting each student to indicate their comfort levels with a show of fingers (0 being least comfortable, 5 being super comfortable). At first, 3 students rated their comfort level as 0; one student gave a rating of 1. At the end, 1 student gave a 3, and three students gave a 4.

Because this was a group with very limited English, the scaffolds we put into place were very useful. After reviewing the key vocabulary, and modeling the use of the letter template, students were able to brainstorm and publish their ideas and opinions well. While students were working on their letters, I sat with one student, whose low reading and writing skills require extra support.

All in all, I believe that today was very effective. I only wish that more students could have attended!

How to Write a Letter to your Senator or Representative

Dear Senator _____:

Or

Dear Representative _____:

My name is _____, and I live in _____. I am writing to express my concern about _____, and to ask for your support on the issue.

This issue is important to me because _____
_____. This affects my community because _____
_____.

For these reasons, I am asking you to support the _____ bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your title/credentials

Your address

Your phone number