

EL/Civics Lesson Plan

Program Name Euclid EL/CIVICS

Staff Responsible for Lesson Wendy Oliver

Date(s) Used	2/24/11
Civics Category	II. Civic Participation
Civics Objective	3. Community Resources - Advocacy
Time Frame to Complete Lesson	1 hour
EFL(s)	NRS 4, 5, 6
Standard(s)	Determine the Purpose for communicating. Seek feedback and revise to enhance the effectiveness of communication
Benchmark(s)	W4.1, 5.1 W4.6, 5.6, 6.6
Materials	Handout Dictionaries
Activities	.Remind students of the role of Senators. .Choose an issue of national significance that the class can discuss and reach agreement on. We chose affordable government healthcare because people who lose their jobs should still have it. .As a class, list the pros and cons of the issue on the board. Some reasons why government should provide it might be because government must protect its citizens, because we have a right to happiness and therefore to be healthy, etc. Some reasons why government should not provide it might be free enterprise or cost. .Tell students you will be writing to a senator asking him or her to do what the class wants. If you can't reach consensus, you can have the class write 2 different letters. .Review the rules of a good letter - Handout .Collectively, write the body of the letter on the board. Have them spell the words that are not simple. Make corrections as needed based on student input. Tell them where the errors are, but have them figure out how to fix. .Have one student rewrite the body of the letter and have the class sign it. .Mail the letter.
Assessment/	Hopefully you will receive a reply to the letter. Talk about other occasions when you might want to write. (to express an

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Evidence	opinion about a political issue or upcoming vote in Congress, for help with a federal government problem, to invite them to an event in your community, to request a flag that has been flown over the capitol, to get a congratulatory greeting for a friend or relative, or to get help with an appointment to one of the service academies.
Reflection	Finding consensus was harder than expected so I ended up soliciting opinions on various topics and boarding them. Eventually, I found one we all agreed on. I suggest you keep the opinions very broad. Even statements like 'Unemployment should be protected from budget cuts' proved controversial among the unemployed. Some students were very interested in requesting a flag. Most were shocked that you could ask a senator to write a letter to your relative for an occasion. I was, too.

So, you're going to write your Congressman? Good idea. Make it a good letter.

People who think members of Congress pay little or no attention to constituent mail, are plain wrong. Concise, well thought out personal letters are one of the most effective ways Americans have of influencing law-makers. But, members of Congress get hundreds of letters and emails every day. Whether you choose to use the Postal Service or email, here are some tips that will help your letter have impact.

Think Locally

It's usually best to send letters to the representative from your local Congressional District or the senators from your state. Your vote helps elect them -- or not -- and that fact alone carries a lot of weight. It also helps personalize your letter. Sending the same "cookie-cutter" message to every member of Congress may grab attention but rarely much consideration.

Keep it Simple

Your letter should address a single topic or issue. Typed, one-page letters are best. Many PACs ([Political Action Committees](#)) recommend a three-paragraph letter structured like this:

1. Say why you are writing and who you are. List your "credentials." (If you want a response, you must include your name and address, even when using email.)
2. Provide more detail. Be factual not emotional. Provide specific rather than general information about how the topic affects you and others. If a certain bill is involved, [cite the correct title or number](#) whenever possible.
3. Close by requesting the action you want taken: a vote for or against a bill, or change in general policy.

The best letters are courteous, to the point, and include specific supporting examples.

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Addressing Members of Congress

To Your Senator:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your Representative:

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515