

Maine Municipal Literacy Project

LESSON PLAN

Educating Citizens About Local Policy Change

Grade Level: 9-12

Key Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Research Human response to change.
2. Understand how thoughtfully changes must be made to be successful.
3. Consider how seemingly small local changes impact individual citizens.
4. Articulate how powerful design and language can be in influencing our reactions.

Project Description:

The class will interview a local official whose office is preparing for a change in policy. Why are they making the change? How it will affect citizens? What do they expect the public's reaction will be? What most concerns them about presenting this change to the public? What do they need the public to know? Students will then take on a specific assignment to help make the change as successful as possible. Once the best medium for educating the public has been decided on, each student will design an educational flyer, news brief, or local news spot about the policy change.

Lesson Introduction:

•DISCUSSION: Think of a rule that has changed in the students' school lately. Discuss how they reacted to the change. See if they can articulate why they reacted this way. Ask them what the school might have done to make the change more fluid.

•LOOKING BEHIND THE SCENES: Ask an administrator to come in and talk about the process that went into the policy change. What most surprises students about what happened behind the scenes before the change was made?

Have students complete **Journal #1** about what they learned from this introductory discussion.

•APPLYING OUTWARD: Invite a local municipal worker who is planning a policy change to talk with the class. Students will now be at the front end of the change and involved in making the change a success.

Have students take notes on this presentation in **Journal #2**.

Instructional Strategies and Activities:

- Read an article on human reaction to change. (See link below for one option.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
begins with **YOU**



JMG
WE BELIEVE IN MAINE STUDENTS

The Maine Municipal Literacy Project is a partnership between the Maine Municipal Association, the City of Saco, and Jobs for Maine's Graduates. The project is supported by the Maine Community Foundation.

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Have students take notes on what they learn and how it applies to their life and their assignment in **Journal #3**.

- Find excellent examples of whatever medium you chose to work in (video, flyer, news brief) to share with the class. Take a block to critique what makes these professional pieces powerful and to articulate what qualities they share. Use this list to guide and ultimately assess their work.

Have students record this list in **Journal #4**.

- Begin writing possible text for their piece on the policy change. Discuss how word choice will affect how citizens feel about the change. Practice replacing negative words and phrases with positive ones.

These notes on copy will be **Journal #5**.

- Give students time to develop a complete draft of their piece.
- Conduct class critique and gather a list of suggestions that all students can use to further refine and strengthen their work.

Have students record these suggestions in **Journal #6**.

- Allow time for final revision of work.

Assessment:

- Throughout the project students will write 7 Journals documenting their learning. These reflections will serve as a reference as they design a thoughtful piece educating citizens about local change.
- Students will receive an initial critique of their communication pieces from each other and their teacher.
- Students will receive feedback on final drafts of their work from town representatives.
- Students will hear what impact their work has had on citizens once the change was made.
- Grades will be given for thoughtful participation in each step of the process.

Sharing the Learning:

The town will use the strongest student work to help educate citizens about policy change.

Reflection:

In **Journal #7**, ask students to think back to the initial discussion of a recent rule change at their school. Do they see it differently now? If they had been principal, how would they have educated students about the change to ensure the smoothest transition possible?

Resources needed: Computers for design of professional communication pieces.

Please Note:

Additional curriculum materials can be found on the Maine Municipal Association website at:
http://www.memun.org/public/local_govt/ed/default.html

Helpful Resources:

The following link provides good tips for flyer design:

http://www.ideabook.com/tutorials/marketing_pr/create_a_smart_flyer.html

- The following MIT article examines the powerful impact even small changes have on humans:

http://web.mit.edu/hr/oed/learn/change/art_four_room.html