

Your Ideas Count!

How to Talk With Kids About Representative Democracy



Message: Your Ideas Count

- Legislators are committed to public service.
- Legislators care about students' concerns and opinions.
- Legislators deal with lots of different interests—and try to listen to all viewpoints on every issue.
- The legislative process can be slow and contentious because people seldom agree on public policy issues, making it hard to find solutions acceptable to everyone.
- Negotiation and compromise are necessary to solve public problems.

Talking With Kids

- Deal with students in an informal, personable manner; be straightforward and real.
- Personalize the lesson to issues your kids care about: driving regulations, cyberbullying, video game restrictions, school testing, school funding, curfews, for example.
- Send teachers a short biography, a description of what activities you have planned and topics you might discuss before your visit.

Suggested Activities

Simulate legislative analysis of a policy issue—Conduct a committee hearing on a policy issue allowing students to testify, debate and vote (middle or high school students).

Solve a class problem—Discuss a relevant problem to the class (for example, what to cut with less school funding or what food to serve in the cafeteria). Have them debate the possibilities and negotiate an agreement (all grade levels).

Present a day in the life of a legislator—Illustrate a typical legislative day for you—such as dealing with constituent problems, listening to diverse points of view, negotiating and compromising, making a decision and voting, etc. (all grade levels).

Imagine the perfect chocolate chip cookie (or pizza, school lunch, etc.)—Ask the students to decide as a class what makes a perfect chocolate chip cookie. When they are unable to agree, lead them through the process of negotiation and compromise by deciding on nuts or no nuts, which nuts, semi-sweet, milk or dark chocolate chips, soft or chewy, thick or thin (elementary school).

Back to School Classroom Materials



Your Ideas Count! Representative Democracy and You (High School and Adult)

This booklet challenges readers to consider how they feel about our system of government and how representative democracy relates to them.



Your Ideas Count! inTime (High School)

This special edition of inTime, published by TIME magazine, explores the myths and realities about American democracy and challenges students to get involved. It includes a Teacher's Guide.



You Rule (Middle School/High School)

This colorful booklet persuades students that citizens, including themselves, really do matter and can have a voice in our system of democracy.



Your Ideas Count! TFK Extra! (Grades 2-3)

This fun-filled supplement to TIME for Kids, published by TIME magazine, helps young students understand the basics about our system of government.



Your Ideas Count! TFK Extra! (Grades 4-6)

This supplement to TIME for Kids, published by TIME magazine, illustrates how laws affect students like themselves and shows them that legislators are real people, too.



You Rule (Middle School/High School) DVD

Join four students, in this educational 18-minute video, as they discover how, in American democracy, citizens rule and young people have a voice.



The Citizen (Grades 4-6) DVD

Join the Citizen in a journey to learn about our republic and the roles and responsibilities of citizens.

For more information go to: www.ncsl.org/backtoschool. To order materials, contact your Back to School coordinator listed on the website under "coordinator" in the left column.



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