

Legislator Talking Points Card

Your Ideas Count- Talking with Kids About Representative Democracy

Talking with kids about representative democracy and how legislatures work is a great opportunity for lawmakers.

Message: Your Ideas Count

- Legislators care about constituents' needs and problems and what they think about issues.
- Legislators are committed to public service.
- Legislators deal with lots of competing interests- every viewpoint is heard on every issue.
- People don't agree on most issues- it's hard to find solutions to public problems.
- Negotiation and compromise are necessary to solve public problems.
- The legislative process is sometimes slow and contentious because of competing interests and lack of agreement.

Suggestions for Talking with Kids

- Deal with students in an informal, person manner; be straightforward and real.
- Talk about issues that kids care about, for example, school violence, driving age, video game restrictions, smoking on campus, graffiti, competency testing to graduate, or curfews.
- Personalize the lesson.
- Send teachers your resume and a description of the activities you have planned for the class in advance of the visit.

Your Ideas Count- Suggested Activities

Legislative Simulation- Conduct a simulated committee hearing on a policy issue allowing students to testify, debate and vote (middle or high school students).

Solving a class problem- Present a problem to the class (for example, a good destination for a class outing) and have them debate the possibilities and negotiate an agreement (all grade levels).

A day in the life of a legislator- Select a page from a legislative day on your personal calendar to illustrate such things as dealing with constituent problems, listening to diverse points of view, negotiating, compromising, decision-making and balancing your personal and professional life with legislative life (all grade levels).

The perfect chocolate chip cookies (perfect pizza, perfect 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 a process of deciding on nuts or no nuts, many or few chips, soft or chewy, thick or thin (elementary school).



For more information see www.ncsl.org/trust