



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

“The Constitution, Branches of Government and How a bill becomes a law "We Need a Law!"”

Lesson Plan

Contributor: Belinda Glenn **Grade Level:** 3rd

1. Identify the standards to be addressed:

3.12 The student will recognize the importance of government in the community, Virginia, and the United States of America by

- a) explaining the purpose of laws;
- b) explaining that the basic purposes of government are to make laws, carry out laws, and decide if laws have been broken; and
- c) explaining that government protects the rights and property of individuals.

2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:

Students will review the concept of rules and laws, taught previously. Students will learn/understand that the Constitution are the laws of our country. They will learn when the Constitution was first signed in 1787 and it was not a perfect document that needed amendments and further ratification. They will learn there are three branches of government and that the legislative branch is responsible for making laws and that the judicial branch upholds the laws of the Constitution.

3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:

Developing prior knowledge-read aloud "The Constitution" by Lynn Cheney
Brain Pop Jr. video about the Constitution and 4 branches
Democracy Social Studies Weekly newspaper, week 4
Smart Board, chart paper to chart responses
poster board signs: The President, The House of Representatives, The Senate, Two pieces of paper for the each bill.

4. Introduction of the topic:

Review vocabulary: judicial, executive, legislative, change, justice, constitution. Discuss and review the 4 basic principles of government taught in a previous lesson. How does government make sure these rights and principles are upheld? Who decides? How is it decided if a law has been broken? Can we make new laws or add To the Constitution? Chart answers and discuss. Keep the chart up during the next activity. Now chart some ideas that students would like to see become a law. Keep the chart displayed also.

5. Procedure for instruction:

Activity: We need a Law! Read the first "article" from the paper, "Government of the People" and discuss the importance of our large country having laws that are all included in our CONSTITUTION. Stress the importance of this document, that it was written after the Revolution and that it has remained the "law of our land" for over 200 years. Read the article "Government of the People" from The Social Studies weekly.

Activity: We need a law-divide students into three groups; Senate, House, President. One child will be a concerned citizen and one child will be the President. The rest of the class will be Senators and Representatives. the concerned citizen will decide on an idea that he/she would like to become law from the list we brainstormed. The

citizen shows the law they would like their senator and representative to bring to congress in the form of a bill. We brainstormed some ideas first. The two final ideas were: 1. allow 16 year olds to vote 2. change the tax to a flat tax where everyone pays the same taxes ____%. Students then voted between the two. The tax bill was chosen to present to the Congress. The citizen chose one representative and one senator to discuss their bill with. the chosen two lawmakers return to their groups, they discuss it and make any changes to the idea. Both houses agreed to the bill, but the House set the flat tax at 20% and the Senate set the flat tax at 31%. his group decide which bill they like the best and vote. Both houses talked about their bills and the bill for the 20% tax rate was chosen. They send the bill to the President. If the student-President decided, she likes the bills sent up and she passed the bill She signed the bill and it became law.

6. **Lesson closure:**

I know it's a very simple process in the classroom, but what did you realize about making a new law and getting the law passed? Discussion. Did you think the process was difficult? why or why not? Some laws passed are very helpful and have stood the test of time in our Constitution. But our Constitution has been changed and laws have been added. Give examples of the amendment ending slavery, the amendment giving Black Americans the right to vote, the amendment that gave women the right to vote.

7. **Assessment of student understanding:**

While this was a very encapsulated process that did cut corners, the students did seem to understand that the process of presenting a bill and turning it into a law is not a simple process. They seemed to understand in very simplistic terms the system of "checks and balances". As we moved through the process, I stopped and posed questions to them such as "what if the senate doesn't agree?" they had to analyze the process and understand that we must put the best bill forward, but be willing to compromise on our bill. The students seemed to have a grasp of the branches



