

The American Bill of Rights

Summary

This lesson is intended to familiarize students with the Bill of Rights and what responsibilities accompany those rights. It emphasizes the importance of civic responsibilities in order to protect and preserve citizen rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Time Frame

1 class periods of 60 minutes each

Materials

- Sample sheet of rights (See handout below.)
- Slips of paper to record rights reported by students
- Container from which students will pull paper slip
- Several charts entitled "American Bill of Rights and Responsibilities" for student to write their comments
- Pens for recording student responses

Background for Teachers

While it is important for our students to learn about their rights, they also need to know that with these rights come responsibilities. This lesson gives students opportunities see the need for a balance between rights and responsibilities in order for democracy to work.

Intended Learning Outcomes

After studying the Bill of Rights students will be able to describe their rights and the responsibilities that are associated with them.

Instructional Procedures

Teacher begins by explaining the significance of September 17 as Constitution Day. You may give as much information as you want about the Constitutional Convention, but the main idea is to introduce the concept of what rights and responsibilities are contained in the first ten amendments of the Constitution.

With student input, make a list of rights and freedoms the Bill of Right gives them. Add any other rights you feel they missed (see sample list) until you have about 15-20 examples.

You may want take time to explain any of these rights to help student understanding. Have someone write each of these rights on slips of paper and put them into a container for students to draw from. Have students pair up and select one slip from the container. Explain that now they are to discuss what responsibilities are connected with that particular right. You could have prepared charts entitled "The American Bill of Rights" posted in several places in the room where students will record the right they selected and list what responsibilities they have along with that right. The charts could then be put together to reflect all the rights and responsibilities suggested by the class.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

Adaptations may be made with the following suggestions:

- Have students complete drawings or posters of responsibilities tied to specific rights guaranteed by the constitution.
- Allow students to select a right then act out the responsibilities tied to the right. Classmates play charades guessing the rights declared in the Constitution.

Help students construct a cube with pictures of rights and responsibilities either drawn or pasted on each side. Give students time to roll the cubes and determine if the picture shown is a right or a responsibility. For more advanced, have students determine which specific amendment is tied to the picture. Have students share their cubes with each other for more diverse ideas.

Assessment Plan

Students will be assessed by having each pair explain the reasons for the responsibilities they listed. Comments from other students can add to the discussions.

Bibliography

We the People: Citizen and the Constitution. Center for Civic Education, Ed., 1998.
<http://charltonrose.com/misc/billresp/>
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/education/plans/Rights%20and%20Responsibilities.doc>
<http://www.lwvor.org/citizensrightsresp.htm>

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