

Citizen Character Traits: Learning to Petition Public Officials

Students will learn the steps to petition public officials and who their public officials are.

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| Grade Level | 6 th |
| Duration | 2 class periods |

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT ONE: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

ELEMENT FOUR: HUMAN SYSTEMS

12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

Arizona Geography Strand

Concept 1: The World in Spatial Terms

- PO 1.** Construct maps, charts, and graphs to display geographic information.
- PO 3.** Interpret maps, charts, and geographic databases using geographic information.
- PO 4.** Locate physical and human features (e.g., significant waterways, mountain ranges, cities, countries) in the United States and in regions of the world on a map.

Other Arizona Standards

Strand 3 Civics/Government Concept 4 Roles of Citizenship

- PO 3.** Describe the importance of citizens being actively involved in the democratic process (e.g., voting, student government, involvement in political decision making, analyzing issues, petitioning public officials).

Strand 1 American History Concept 10: Contemporary United States

- PO 1.** Describe current events using information from class discussions and various resources (e.g., newspapers, magazines, television, Internet, books, maps).

6-8 Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

- Production and Distribution of Writing**
- 6-8.WHST.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- a. Produce clear and coherent functional writing (e.g., formal letters, envelopes, procedures, labels, timelines, graphs/tables, experiments, maps, captions, charts, diagrams) in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate.

Overview

America prides itself on being a democracy “run for its people by its people”. Therefore, everyone

should have the opportunity to learn how to become a good citizen.

Citizen Character Traits: Learning to Petition Public Officials

Purpose

In this lesson students will learn how to geographically determine their local congressional representative and how to contact them. The students will then have an opportunity to petition their representatives with a letter concerning a current issue in our government. By learning how to do this, students will have the practice in becoming more active citizens.

Materials

- Access to a computer lab (or at least 1 computer) with Google Earth installed and internet access.
- Google Earth Student Directions
- Letter to Your Representative Template
- Model of letter sent to Senator McCain
- Congressional Districts maps
<http://nationalatlas.gov/printable/congress.html>

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. identify what congressional district they live in.
2. identify their congressional representatives and record their contact information.
3. petition their congressional representative.

Procedures

SESSION ONE

1. Begin the lesson by asking your students if they know what it means to be a representative. (standing in or acting for others) This hopefully will lead to a brief class discussion of kinds of representatives (student council, city council, congressional).
2. Next ask the students if they know who their congressional representative is? Do they know how to find out that information?
3. Distribute Google Earth Student Directions with the National Atlas map of Congressional Districts.
4. Go to a computer lab and complete the worksheet.
5. At the end of session, collect this worksheet to grade for completion.

SESSION TWO

6. Ask students to review with a partner how they found their congressional representative yesterday using Google Earth. How else could they have found this information?
7. Ask if anyone knows what “petition” (formal request addressed to a person in authority) means.
8. Then discuss reasons people petition (write) their representative. (Guide them to think about issues in education, health care, economy, etc. These can be simple ideas that just scratch the surface and don’t need to be fully explained and in-depth.)
9. Write these ideas in a bulleted list on the board for all students to see.
10. Distribute the Letter to Your Representative Template. Share the model of an actual letter sent to Senator McCain asking for more money for geographic education.
11. Have students select one of the topics and complete the template.
12. As students finish, look over their letters and approve them for a final copy.
13. Have students write a final letters on notebook paper or use a computer.

Assessment

The Google Earth Student Directions can be graded for accuracy. Mastery will be considered 80% or higher.

Students’ final letter will be graded based on the 6 Traits Writing Rubric. Mastery will be a score of 4 or higher on the 6 Traits Writing Rubric in the areas of voice, sentence fluency, and organization.

Extensions

Students can explore <http://nationalatlas.gov/printable/congress.html> to see how many districts other states are divided into or they can do the Arizona Geographic Alliance lesson called The Electoral College to see how representation is determined and the purpose of this body.

Students can mail their letters to their representative. They can discuss what kind of response they would like to receive in regards to the issues addressed in their letter. Students can also exchange letters and write responses as if they are the representative.

Students can also use their representatives’ website to learn about events that they can take place in, and contest they can enter.



Sources

Download Google Earth for Free
www.Earth.google.com

The following links allow you to download printable PDF maps of every state that show the congressional boundaries. It however does not show you who the representatives currently are.
<http://nationalatlas.gov/printable/congress.html>
<http://nationalatlas.gov/index.html>

Government site to help you locate your representative:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

Arizona website site to help you locate your representative:

<http://az.gov/app/govinfo/>