

Petitioning

Grade Level: All

Time: Varies

Objectives

- Examine the right to petition.
- Determine strategies for a successful petition campaign.

Curricular Connections: Language Arts, Civics

Materials:

- Petitioning Pointers
(www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuider/Activities/PetitioningPointers.pdf)
- Petition Planning Sheet
(www.publicachievement.org/TeacherGuider/Activities/PetitioningPlanning.pdf)

Procedure:

- 1) Discuss various situations in which the students have advocated (lobbied) for a particular point of view or action (holding class outside, going to the zoo for a field trip, having pizza for dinner, etc.). Name the steps and skills that were used when successfully changing a rule, policy or decision. Talk about the right to advocate and the first amendment freedom to petition. Ask them to share failed strategies as well.
- 2) Cut the steps in Pointers for Petitioning into separate strips of paper. Have the students work in groups to put them into chronological order. The group's spokesperson should defend its results to the full class.
- 3) Have the students use Pointers for Petitioning and Petition Planning Sheet to create a petition. It can involve an issue/problem that has already been selected for PA, or it can be a different problem if you want to focus on developing petitioning as a tool for change. Some time should be spent on discussing the types of issues that are best addressed through a petition.
- 4) Students can then have some time to get signatures (a target can be selected). If you want the students to have a real audience, they can actually present their petitions to the decision-makers. Note, it is much more effective to do so at a public meeting and with media present, so you may need to assist them with this strategy.
- 5) Remind students that they should not be pressuring others to sign their petition—all points of view are respected. Prepare them that those approached for signatures may want to request additional information about the issue before they sign.

Reflection:

1. Students will report out their experience with the effectiveness of the petition as a tool for change.
2. Students will note changes that would have made it more successful.

Assessment: Review the completed petitions (and perhaps the end result).

1. The quantity of ideas and involvement of students indicates creative thinking skills.
2. Students' reflections on list demonstrate critical reasoning skills.