



VOICING YOUR OPINION

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students attend a meeting (school board, town, city council, etc.) and voice their views on a selected issue either verbally or in writing.

MATERIALS

Newspapers; public opinion surveys; printed materials from the school board or city council.

GET READY

- ✓ Call the city council office and the superintendent of schools and ask to be put on a mailing list for the locations, dates, times, and agendas of public meetings.
- ✓ List current community issues that will be addressed at the meetings. (Your students will be choosing one.)

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have your students select a current community issue, that is of concern to youth, that will be discussed at an upcoming school board or city council meeting.
- ✓ Ask students to find out all they can about this issue, the various perspectives held by community members, and the options for action. Newspapers, public opinion surveys, and printed materials from the school board or city council will be the best sources of information. (See the lesson on *Choosing an Issue* for further ideas on how to have students research an issue.)

- ✓ Have students develop their own position on the issue. Their positions should be written in essay form and should include: a) a brief description of the issue; b) a discussion of different perspectives and ideas for action on the issue; c) the student's own perspective; and d) reasons supporting the student's perspective.
- ✓ Students should choose whether they would like to express their opinion in a letter to the city council or school board or publicly at the group's meeting. If students write letters, have them send them ahead of the meeting the students will attend. If students plan to speak publicly, they can write out a few notes on an index card to remind them of their key points.
- ✓ If possible, with your class, obtain and watch part of a videotape of a past city council or school board meeting. After watching the tape, discuss with your students how the meetings are organized. What are the rules for who can speak? When will students speak? Will they remain seated, stand up or speak from a podium?
- ✓ Attend the meeting as a class, if possible. The next day in class, discuss the meeting and the students' contributions.

**VOICING YOUR OPINION** (continued)**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- ★ *Do any of you have issues of concern that you would like to try to get on a community group's agenda in the future?*
- ★ *Do you feel like it is worth your time expressing your views to a community group? Why or why not?*
- ★ *Do you think the community group's meeting that we attended made a difference in regards to the issue the class was interested in?*
- ★ *Did you feel that your views were heard and respected?*

MORE!

- ✓ Continue to stay informed about this community issue. Encourage students to bring in news clippings and/or attend future public meetings where this issue is addressed and report back to the class. Have a bulletin board in the room or school hallway where students can post news clippings.