

**Title**: Global Poverty and the Legislative Process

**Grades:** 6-8

**Subject**: Social Studies

**Secondary** **Subject**: Civics and Economics

**Specific** **Topic**: Poverty and the Legislative process

**Rationale**:

This lesson plan will introduce students to the issue of global poverty, governance, and civic engagement. Much of the lesson will focus on civic engagement as a means of reducing poverty, and thereby improving the human condition. By introducing simple and effective means of reducing poverty, the curriculum will hopefully teach students that the size of a problem does not necessarily correlate to the ease with which it is solved. By the end of this lesson, the student will have a greater sense of obligation to the world around them, for they will learn how an individual voice can create change. The student will have also a greater knowledge of global poverty, governance, and civic engagement.

**Applicable** **Standards of Washington** **State**:

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| *Social Studies*  |  |
| Component 1.2  | Understands the purposes, organization, and function of governments, laws, and political systems |
| Component 1.3  | Understands the purposes and organization of international relationships and US foreign policy |
| Component 1.4  | Understands civic involvement |
| Component 2.1  | Understands that people have to make choices between wants and needs and evaluate the outcomes of those choices |
| Component 2.4  | Understands the economic issues and problems that all societies face |
| Component 3.3 | Understands the geographic context of global issues |
| Component 4.4  | Uses history to understand the present and plan for the future |
| Component 5.1 | Uses critical reasoning skills to analyze and evaluate positions |
| Component 5.3 | Deliberates public issues |
| Component 5.4  | Creates a product that uses social studies content to support a thesis and presents the product in an appropriate manner to a meaningful audience |
| *Writing*  |  |
| Component 1.5  | Publishes text to share with audiences  |
| Component 2.2  | Writes for different purposes |
| Component 2.3  | Writes in a variety of forms/genres |
| Component 3.1  | Develops ideas and organizes writing  |
| *Communication*  |  |
| Component 1.2 | Understands, analyzes, synthesizes, or evaluates information from a variety of sources. |
| Component 3.1 | Uses knowledge of topic/theme, audience, and purpose to plan presentations. |
| Component 3.3  | Uses effective delivery. |

**Student prerequisites:**

Before beginning this lesson, students should have a basic understanding of the legislative process. Students should also have a basic understanding of global poverty.

**Primary Objective:**

The primary objective of this lesson is for students to understand that they can influence the legislative process so as to bring change to a particular issue, in this case, global poverty.

**Performance** **Goals**:

* Students should understand what it means to be poor
* Students should understand why civic engagement is important
* Students should understand that there is a link between global poverty and governance
* Students should communicate with their congressional leader

**Materials:**

Recommended Reading for this unit

*A long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* – Ishmael Beah (2007)

*The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty Through Profits* – C.K. Prahalad (2004)

*The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* – Jeffrey D. Sachs (2005)

*Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty* – Muhammad Yunus (2007)

*The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* – Paul Collier (2007)

*The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* – William Easterly (2007)

*Poor Economics* – Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (2011)

Computer

Projector

Recent news article about global poverty

The Borgen Project PowerPoint

AfriGadget (<http://www.afrigadget.com/>)

Schoolhouse rock clip: How a Bill Becomes a Law (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEJL2Uuv-oQ>)

**Lesson Plan**

**Day 1: (45 minutes – 1 hour)**

Anticipatory Set: (20-25 minutes)

To begin this lesson, have the classroom read an article about global poverty. The article can address the issue of global poverty from the perspective of an individual, a community, a state, or an international coalition. When the class has finished reading the article, ask the students what they thought of the article. Did the article identify a cause of poverty? Did the article suggest a solution for that cause? What kind of challenges did the people in the article face? Can the students relate to these challenges? How did the article make them feel?

Introduction to Global Poverty (20-30 minutes)

After completing the anticipatory section of this lesson plan, run through the Borgen Project PowerPoint. While you are running through the PowerPoint, encourage each student to ask questions. The student should also be asked to create comparisons between what they are leaning in the PowerPoint and previous points of study. Before concluding the lesson for day one, make sure each students understands the connection between governmental action and poverty reduction.

Conclusion: (5 minutes)

To conclude the lesson plan for day one, introduce the final project to the class. For the final project, each student will present a plan to reduce poverty. The student can present their plan in many different ways. For example, the student can introduce a bill to congress, draw up a plan for reducing poverty in a particular region, create an invention that would help reduce poverty, or outline a means of supporting an existing cause. The final project will be presented on the third day of the lesson. The presentations should address what they did and how it will help reduce poverty. Before ending the day’s lesson, assign a reading packet that may help each child with their project.

**Day 2: (45 minutes – 1 hour)**

Anticipatory Set: (5 minutes)

Before beginning the lesson plan for day two, ask the students to explain the connection between governmental action and poverty reduction. Once the question has been answered, introduce the Schoolhouse Rock video clip. The link for the video can be found in the materials section of this document.

Group activity: (20-30 minutes)

After watching the Schoolhouse Rock video, How a Bill Becomes a Law, introduce the lesson plan for day two. Explain to the students that they will be participating in a role play. As the teacher you will be acting as a congressional leader who is about to vote on an upcoming bill. The bill would create funding for well construction. The new wells would provide clean water to many villages. This water would improve the health and economic productivity of each village. The wells would also be costly to construct and hard for the villages to fix if they happen to break. As a senator you would like to hear what the classroom, your constituents, have to say about the bill. Do they support the bill, or do they oppose the bill. Before hearing what each side has to say, divide the class into two groups. The first group will argue in favor of the bill. The second group will argue against the bill. Allow 5 – 10 minutes for each group to talk amongst themselves. When the class reconvenes each group should try and convince you, the congressional leader, to support or reject the bill. Once your students are done expressing their opinion, tell them whether you will vote for or against the bill. Your decision should be based upon which argument you found most compelling.

Class involvement in the legislation process: (10-15 minutes)

Once you have voted for or against the bill, explain to the students that congressional leaders often make decisions in a similar manner. They listen to the views of their constituents and vote accordingly. Because of this, it is very important that students contact their congressional leaders, either my mail or by phone. When you are finished explaining this, hand each student a piece of paper and ask them to write a short letter to a congressional leader of their choosing. When the students have completed their work, have them turn in the material for grading. Once the material has been graded mail the student’s work to the appropriate congressional leaders.

Conclusion: (10 minutes)

To conclude the lesson plan for day two, provide a real life example of the role play. The example should explain how an individual or group has influenced the legislative process. You can use this time to talk about grassroots campaigns. Before ending the day’s lesson, ask the students if they have any questions about their projects. Remind the class that their projects are due the following day.

**Day 3: (45 minutes – 1 hour)**

Presentations: (40 minutes)

Have each student present their project to the class. Encourage other students to ask questions and participate in the presentations.

Conclusion: (5 minutes)

To conclude the lesson, ask the class what they learned. Did they think the role play was an accurate portrayal of congressional decision making? How important is it to contact congressional leaders? Why is it important to contact congressional leaders? Did any of their classmates present an idea that would solve or alleviate global poverty? Is this idea sustainable? How could this idea be utilized on a global or national level? Do they think global poverty can be addressed and solved?

**Assessment:**

* Did the student participate in class discussions?
* Did the student remain focused throughout the lesson?
* Did the student ask meaningful and insightful questions?
* Did the student contribute to the class debate?
* Did the student present an outline for alleviating poverty?
* Was the student’s outline well organized and creative?