



Lesson 4: Introducing Policy Analysis

Overview

In this lesson, students develop a deeper understanding of public policy and the interaction between government and citizens in making policy. They look at case studies and are introduced to policy analysis.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze a public policy in terms of its goal and who might support or oppose the policy.
- Recognize that there are multiple perspectives about problems and policies.
- State a reasoned opinion on whether they favor or oppose a particular public policy.

Preparation & Materials

- [Handout 4A: Case Study Analysis](#)—1 per student
- **Handout 4B: Case Studies**—Two different case studies per group of 4–6 students (there are six case studies, 8–10 copies of each case study for a class of 32–40 students)

[Case Study: Reopening Schools During COVID-19](#)

[Case Study: School Shooting Inspires Florida Gun Control](#)

[Legislation](#) (Tallahassee, FL)

[Case Study: Needle-Exchange Programs and the Opioid Crisis](#) (Scottsburg, IN)

[Case Study: Mississippi Voter ID Laws](#) (Jackson, MS)

[Case Study: Contaminated Water in Flint](#) (Flint, MI)

[Case Study: Proposed EPA Legislation Weakens Regulation on Coal Ash Disposal](#) (Kingston, TN)

- Additional case studies and discussion questions on a range of other issues are available here.

[Suicide Barriers](#) (Santa Barbara, CA)

[Random Student Drug Testing](#) (Hackettstown, NJ)

[More Street Lights Needed to Curb Crime](#) (Oakland, CA)

[Lead-Testing Requirement](#) (Washington, D.C.)

[Firefighting Fee in California Wildfire](#) (Trinity, CA)

[Anti-panhandling Movement Grows in Northern California](#) (Redding, CA)

[State Regulates Commercial Dog Breeders](#) (Philadelphia, PA)

[Trustees Raise Ohio University Parking Fines](#) (Athens, OH)

[Plastic Bags Banned](#) (San Francisco, CA)

Procedure

I. Introduction—Problems, Policies, and Perspectives

Remind students that the CAP lessons are going to help them learn more about government and about citizens' role in government by looking at real issues. Tell them that today they are going to take a look at several issues that have been in the news. Explain that these issues inspired a wide variety of opinions on the problem itself and what kind of policy might be effective in addressing that problem.

II. Small-Group Activity—Policy Case Studies

A. Divide the class into groups of 4–6. Distribute **Handout 4A: GRADE** to each student.

Read the introductory paragraph together and then give students a few minutes to just skim the first page. Take any clarifying questions.

Explain that they will work in a small group to use this tool to analyze a policy in a case study (outlined in the numbered versions of **Handout 4B**). Provide half of each group with copies of one case study, and the other half of the group with a different case study.

Tell students that their task is to:

- Read the case study and work with others in their group to fill out GRADE for that case.
- Share information about the case study with group members who worked on a different case study.

B. After the small groups have shared their two case studies with each other, hold a brief discussion with the whole class to ask clarifying questions about the case studies, such as:

Case Study #1: Florida Gun Control Legislation in the Wake of Parkland School Shooting (Tallahassee, FL)

- How did the Public Safety Act pose problems for both supporters *and* opponents of increased gun control?

III. Debrief

Note: These debriefing questions are also listed on the PowerPoint slide provided [here](#).

A. Ask students:

- Why are public policies created?
- If policies address problems, how might a policy itself be considered a problem?

(If students have difficulty with this question, ask them to consider how critics of their particular policy might respond to the question.)

- What levels and branches of government are involved in public policy? Explain.
- Did looking at these case studies make you want to rethink the working definition of public policy we developed in Lesson 1? Why or why not?
- What did you learn about public policy that you think all citizens should know?

B. After completing this lesson, have students return to the Citizenship Brainstorm and list any additional Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Actions they now think engaged citizens might demonstrate or take to make an impact on society.