

CLASSROOM LESSON

Distracted Driving: Lobbying and Distracted Driving

Street Law, Inc. thanks the Allstate Foundation for providing funding for research and development of this lesson.

Time: 50 minutes

Outcomes

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

- Define lobbyist.
- Explain concerns about distracted driving and list possible laws to address those concerns.
- Describe ways to advocate for a position to legislators

Skills Outcomes

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

- Assess the impact of a proposed law
- Analyze data
- Develop and implement a survey

Before teaching:

In advance - Give your partner teacher the **Vocabulary List** at the end of this lesson, and ask that they cover the terms with students before your visit. Discuss the homework assignment with the classroom teacher—students will need to poll their peers about distracted driving. Make plans to have the teacher set a due date and review the survey results, or plan time to review results at the field trip.

Create two signs: “In Favor” and “Against;” post them at either end of one wall in the classroom. Post the lesson outcomes.

Who Lobbies? (25 minutes)

1. Introduce the volunteers, and tell the students that today, they’ll be thinking about laws about driving and the ways people try to influence the lawmaking process. Ask for a student volunteer to read the posted outcomes aloud.
2. Put students in groups of 3-5 and give copies of Handout 1 to each student. Instruct the students to spend about 10 minutes reading the proposed law and answering the questions. Circulate to make sure the groups are on task and to answer any questions.

Classroom Lesson – Distracted Driving: Lobbying and Distracted Driving

3. After 10 minutes, call the class back together and ask one group to volunteer to give their answer to question 1: Which groups, organizations, or individuals might be in favor of this law? Why? List two reasons that they might support this law. After hearing their answer, ask if any of the other groups listed different people in favor or different reasons.
4. Ask a group to volunteer to answer question 2: Which groups, organizations, or individuals might be opposed to this law? Why? List two reasons that they might oppose this law. Again, ask if other groups have different answers, and invite them to share.
5. Move on to question 3: Do you think this law would pass among students at your school? Tell students to make sure they all have an answer written on their handout.
6. Next, point out the two signs that you posted before the lesson—In Favor and Against. Tell the students that they are going to vote on this proposed law. If they would vote in favor of the law, they should go stand by the “In Favor” sign. If they would vote against the law, they should stand by the “Against” sign.
7. Tell the students to stand up and move to the appropriate sign. Once they are all positioned, call on two or three students to explain their votes. Why are they in favor of or opposed to the proposed law? (Keep this discussion to five minutes). After hearing the arguments, ask if any students want to switch their original vote due to a persuasive argument. Then, tally the votes. Write the total on the board or flip chart and invite students to return to their seats. Once they are seated, ask for a show of hands to see how many predicted the outcome of the class vote in question 3. Ask whether they think this class is representative of the entire school.
8. Ask the students to suggest some actions that people who are strongly in favor of or opposed to the proposed law might take to advocate for or against its passage. Write these ideas on the board. After a few ideas have been voiced, tell students that working to convince lawmakers to vote in a certain way is called *lobbying* and write the term on the board.

Optional Extension

(If your class period is longer than 50 minutes, you can add steps 9 and 10 to explore lobbying in more detail.)

9. Distribute Handout 2. Ask the students to read through the information silently.
10. Briefly discuss the questions on the handout—name businesses or organizations that might hire professional lobbyists to advocate for their position; name an organization or a cause that might be lobbied for by non-professionals; describe the positive and negative aspects of our lobbying system.

Activity: Creating a Survey & Poll (20 minutes)

Classroom Lesson – Distracted Driving: Lobbying and Distracted Driving

11. Tell students that they're going to consider a problem that many state legislatures are also considering—distracted driving. The students will have the chance to explore some facts about distracted driving and find out how much their peers know about the issue.
12. Keep students in their groups of 3-5. Distribute **Handout 3** and review the instructions for this activity:
 - Read and analyze the data related to distracted driving.
 - Discuss with your group members; highlight or underline the most important facts.
 - List a few ways to prevent crashes from distracted driving. Which solutions do you prefer?
 - Create a survey and poll to give to your peers. The survey portion should include at least five questions designed to test their knowledge about distracted driving (multiple choice and true/false questions are suggested), and the poll section should pose at least two potential solutions or laws and ask whether or not they support these regulations.

Tell students that once they've created their survey/poll questions, they can fill them in on the template on the second page of Handout 3. The template includes space to list the questions in the poll and to record the answers provided by the people who take the survey (students will poll their peers as a homework assignment).

13. Circulate to the groups to answer questions, make sure they're on task, and provide support. Encourage students to come up with any questions that will test their peers' knowledge and opinions about solutions to distracted driving.
14. After 15 minutes, bring the class back together. Tell students that they are going to have a homework assignment: Each group needs to find 10 people to take their poll (for example, in a group of 4, each person would find 2-3 peers, give them the poll, and record their answers). If you have extra time, invite a few groups to share some of their questions and discuss. Then give the groups a couple of minutes to revise any questions, and for all group members to write the questions on page 2 of Handout 3 so that they can split up to survey peers. If you do not have extra time, skip the sharing step and make sure that all students understand the survey assignment.

Debrief (5 minutes)

15. Ask students what they think their state should do about distracted driving. Do they think it's a problem? What kinds of laws would they support? What should legislators consider before they propose laws about distracted driving? Conclude the lesson by revisiting and reviewing the posted outcomes.

Optional Extension

Discuss the following optional homework activities with your partner teacher:

- Have students process the results of their surveys and create three figures, charts, or graphs that depict the results.
- Have students process the results of their surveys and write an article for the school newspaper about distracted driving and their peers' thoughts.

Handout 3: Facts about Distracted Driving

Instructions:

1. Read the facts about distracted driving.
2. Discuss the facts with your group members. Highlight or underline the facts you think are most important.
3. List a few possible laws that might help to prevent crashes from distracted driving. Which solutions do you prefer?
4. Create a survey to give to your peers. The survey should include:
 - at least **five** questions designed to test their knowledge about distracted driving (multiple choice or true/false questions suggested),
 - at least **three** potential solutions or laws—ask whether or not they would support these regulations.

Facts About Distracted Driving

Almost 20 percent of all crashes in 2008 involved some type of distraction. Nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving a distracted driver, and more than half a million were injured.

Teen drivers are involved in fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers (25 to 69), per mile driven. Of teenagers involved in fatal crashes, 16% were reported as being distracted.

One in four (26%) American teens of driving age say they have texted while driving. Forty percent of drivers younger than 35 (and about 20% of all drivers of all ages) admitted to texting while driving during the previous month.

When drivers use a cell phone while in a driving simulation, they frequently cross over the center line, run on to the road shoulder, and/or noticeably vary their speed. Talking on a cell phone while driving, whether it's hand-held or hands-free, delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent.

Data from the U.S. Department of Transportation, *Statistics and Facts About Distracted Driving* (Available from: <http://www.distraction.gov/stats-and-facts/>) and The Governors Highway Safety Association, *Curbing Distracted Driving: 2010 Survey of State Safety Programs*, (Retrieved from: http://www.distraction.gov/files/research/GHSA-2010_distraction.pdf).

Survey Template

Questions to test knowledge about distracted driving:

Question & Correct Answer	Answers given by people taking the survey			
Sample question: True or False—More than 25% of Americans under age 35 admit to texting while driving. Answer: True	T	T	F	T
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

Questions to find out what potential distracted driving laws are supported:

Proposed Law	Do the people polled support or oppose this potential law?			
Sample: Would you be in favor of a law that banned all cell phone use by drivers?	Yes	No	No	No
1.				
2.				

Classroom Lesson – Distracted Driving: Lobbying and Distracted Driving

Vocabulary List

Ask your partner teacher to cover the following terms with students before the in-class visit.

Advocate
Oppose/opposed
Legislator
Legislative Hearing
Interest group
State Senate Committee
Testimony

If your partner class doesn't have any background in the legislative process, the classroom teacher can also give them a brief overview of a legislative committee's role in drafting and proposing new laws.