

## Lesson Plans - No Vehicles in the Park, No Animals in the Library and No Hats in Class

These lessons have been tried and true favorites for many years. Students love these lessons. A definite success.

Academic Standards: Variations of this lesson abound, ranging from exercises based on children's literature to asking which animals should be allowed in the library to lessons that explore the Pennsylvania school law that bans weapons on school grounds (Act 26). All of the variations involve Academic Standards for Civics and Government, including 5.1 B, I, J; 5.2 F; and 5.3 C, G.

### **No Vehicles in the Park**

Grade Levels: 9 & Up

The "No Vehicles in the Park" lesson involves a mock statute that says, due to problems in the park, there will be no vehicles allowed in the park.

Ask the students if they understand why the rule was made. Do they think it is a good rule? Ask them what they think makes a good rule. They should say things like clear, enforceable and fair.

Then put the students into groups of five or six and ask them to serve as participants in city council hearing petitions involving disputes over the interpretation of the law. Will they allow exceptions to the law?

A student handout is on the next page, please feel free to copy the exercise for your students.

Keep in mind — there are no correct answers; the power of the activity is in the discussion explaining each answer.

This lesson is a condensed version adapted from Street Law's "No Vehicles in the Park" lesson. Even if you decide to do the condensed version, you may want to read over the Street Law version to help you prepare and provide some talking points for your lesson.

### **No Animals in the Library<sup>1</sup>**

Grade Levels: K-3

This lesson was developed by Anne Spector from the Cheltenham School District.

Through this exercise, students will begin to understand what a law is and how to write one.

You will guide them through a series of questions to help them determine if the law is fair and just. If the students determine that it is not a good law, then ask them to help you rewrite it. To begin, write on the board: "No animals in the library." Tell the students that this will be a new rule in their school. Ask them what they think about this rule. You most likely will hear emotional responses and will need to guide them in their thinking. The following are some questions to help you direct their thinking to the legal process:

- Is the rule written in clear language?
- Is the rule understandable?
- Does the rule contradict any other rule in the school?
- Is the rule enforceable?
- What penalties would you suggest when this rule is broken?
- Are these penalties reasonable?

## Lesson Plans - No Vehicles in the Park, No Animals in the Library and No Hats in the Classroom

What about these scenarios? Would they be allowed under the Rule as it is written? What should the penalty be for violating the rule as written? Who decides when it is OK to break the rule or what penalties are fair? Is it fair to treat rule breakers differently depending on the situation? What happens to rules when they are not enforced fairly, equally, or consistently?

- A class hamster that is helping students learn about science, animals, responsibility and other educational lessons?
- A guide dog for a student with a disability?
- An aquarium with fish in the principal's office. The principal says it helps relieve stress and makes the students feel good.
- A stuffed Siberian Husky in the school lobby that is the school's mascot. Go Huskies!
- A lost kitten that wandered into the school. The kitten belongs to a family that lives nearby.
- A monkey that an animal trainer wants to bring in for a special assembly to show the students and teach them about monkeys. What if it was a large Bengal Tiger that the animal trainer wanted to bring in?

Finally, ask them if the library rule is a good rule. If they answer "no," then help them rewrite it.

1. Eric Kimmel. *I Took My Frog to the Library*. Puffin Books: 1960.

### NO HATS IN THE CLASSROOM

- **Grade Levels:** K – 12
- **Special Tip:** For a literature connection to the lesson, read Laura Geringer's *A Three Hat Day*.

Through this exercise students will begin to understand what a law is and how to write one. You will guide them through a series of questions to help them determine if the law is fair and just. If the students determine that it is not a good law and that exceptions need to be made, then ask them to help you rewrite it.



The new principal, Bonnie Beret, arrived at the Caps-Off-To-Reading School. Her first task was to bring her staff together to create the perfect set of rules. Ms. Beret pondered how the staff might promote showing the respect they all spoke about. Finally, it seemed that she had arrived at the answer. Ms. Beret's plan was simple. As she explained to her staff, taking off one's hat is a sign of respect. Her suggestion, therefore, was to have as one of her five key school rules: No Hats in the Classroom. The rule seemed clear and easy to understand. It also seemed like a rule for which there should be no exceptions. Ms. Beret felt that her new rule was a perfect one. Do you?

Ask the students to consider possible exceptions to the rule, such as:

- Security officers who wear headgear for identification (hats) and safety purposes (helmets)
- Children suffering from cancer who wish to hide hair loss
- Children with strong religious beliefs who wear yarmulkes or scarves

Then ask the students if they wish to rewrite the rule. If they do, help them.

## NO VEHICLES IN THE PARK

The town of Owlville had a park that was being overrun by vehicles of all types. To make the park a place where residents might find peace and enjoyment, the town leaders enacted a law that read: “No Vehicles in the Park.” While the law seems clear, some disputes have risen over the interpretation of the law. Please decide the listed cases keeping in mind both the letter of the law as well as the intent of the law.



- A. John lives on one side of town and works on the other side. He will save 10 minutes if he drives through the park.
- B. To keep the park clean, there are many trash barrels in which people may deposit all litter. The sanitation department wants to go into the park with trash trucks to collect the trash.
- C. Two police officers are chasing a suspected bank robber. If one officer cuts through the park, he or she can get in front of the suspect’s car and trap it between the patrol cars.
- D. An ambulance has a dying car-accident victim in it and is racing to the hospital. The shortest route is through the park.
- E. Some of the children who visit the park want to ride their bikes in the park. What about the skateboarders?
- F. Mr. Thomas wants to take his baby to the park in her baby buggy.
- G. A monument to the town’s citizens who died in the Gulf War is being constructed. A tank, donated by the government, is to be placed beside the monument.
- H. Several of the town’s citizens have made a living for several years by driving people around scenic spots in the city in an old-fashioned horse and buggy. They want to drive people through the park