

No Animals in the Library¹

Grade Level: Elementary

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?

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.



Based on this rule, could you have a stuffed Siberian Husky, that is the school's mascot, in the school lobby? Go Huskies!