



LESSON PLANS ON AGING ISSUES:
Creative Ways to Meet Social Studies Standards

U.S. History

COMMON ISSUES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

Ithaca College Gerontology Institute
www.ithaca.edu/aging/schools

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Common Issues for Young and Old: Town Budget Meeting Simulation

Introduction

This unit (two lessons) is a role play designed to demonstrate that youth and older adults have several common issues, and cooperative efforts could yield results.

Students are organized into two groups of the same town: older adults and youth. They are informed that the town council has monies allocated for improvements and is soliciting proposals from the two groups. The two groups work separately and present their proposals to the council. Following the presentations, a comparison of the needs for each group is made, and students realize that both groups have similar needs and desires. (This can also be an effective intergenerational activity.)

Day 1

Materials

Handout: Guide and expectation sheet for creating a funding proposal

Lesson Steps

1. Students are provided with a statement from the Town of Intergap's town council. It is a call for proposals on how to allocate funds. Discussion of general areas of expenditure for town governments is discussed, and a list of expenditure categories is put on the board, e.g. transportation and roads, education, economic development, recreation, social and economic assistance, law enforcement and safety, etc.
2. The class is divided into two special interest groups: older adults and youth. Each group brainstorms specific problems they face in Intergap that could be addressed. (Intergap is a lot like the town they live in). To structure, assign small groups to identify one problem for each of the expenditure categories.
3. Assign each small group for the youth and older adults to create a funding proposal to present to the Intergap town council at their meeting in two days. Each proposal should state the problem, propose a solution, include a brief budget with the explanation for costs, and provide at least two benefits the town will experience as a result of the proposed solution.

Adapted from *Social Studies Classroom Activities for Secondary Schools, Schools in an Aging Society*, State of Connecticut Dept. of Education and Dept. of Aging, 1992.

Day 2

Materials

Podium or speaker's area

Transparency or board to record funding of proposals

Handout: Similarities between Young and Old

Lesson Steps

1. Work with students to define funding "categories". Each student should then make a table.
2. Allow students to present the proposals to the class. Listeners should record the nature of the proposal, and put it in the appropriate funding category box, along with the interest group supporting it.
3. Allow for discussion of proposals, exchange of ideas.
4. Ask students to compare the list of proposals from the youth interest group and the older adult interest group. Is there any common ground? Could funding for a proposal by one group be adapted or revised to serve both groups? Distribute the chart of Similarities between Young and Old. Discuss the common issues the two groups have (income, safety, transportation, access to resources, etc.)
5. Having completed the funding proposal record form, mix the two groups up so that each group consists of advocates for both younger and older citizens. Allow the groups to devise collaborative or compromise proposals that meet the needs of both older and younger people.
6. Repeat format for assigning funding proposal as in lesson 1.
7. When new funding proposals are complete, new group spokespersons present collaborative/compromise proposals to the class. Evaluate proposals, discuss.
8. **Focused Freewrite**: Assign students to write 3-4 minutes, reflecting on the collaborative/compromise proposals and the separate interest group proposals. What lesson can be learned from the experience? Share freewrites. Discuss.

Possible Extension Activities

- Invite a local political leader to discuss one or two issues related to aging that were addressed in the class.
- Invite a corporate human resources director to class to discuss changes in the workplace as the society ages.
- Invite an official from the local AARP chapter to discuss current political issues, such as the cost of health care.
- Research career options that involve working with older adults.

Funding Proposal from Group _____

The Problem: _____

The Solution: _____

Benefits of the Solution:

Budget Proposal

Description of Item	Estimated Cost
Total Cost of Project	

Handout

Similarities Between Young and Old

Younger and older people face similar social, physical, and economic pressures.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Teenagers/Young Adults</u>	<u>Older Adults</u>
Transportation	Getting permission to drive Higher insurance rates	Told they should not drive Higher insurance rates
Work	Told they are too young; too inexperienced	Told they are too old; too experienced; unfamiliar with new technology
Companionship	Single, dating issues	Single (widowed); dating issues
Income	Low-paying jobs	No income from earnings
Sex	Told they are too young	Told they are too old
Drugs	Use of “recreational” drugs	Misuse of prescription or over the counter drugs
Housing	Moving away from home Have to live with parents for economic reasons	Moving to smaller place Have to live with adult children for economic and health reasons
Friends	Friends moving away	Friends moving away or dying
Dependency	Parents tell them what to do	Adult children tell them what to do
Aging	Physical changes related to age	Physical changes related to age
Emotions	Occasional depression; feelings of hopelessness; sometimes leading to suicide	Occasional depression; feelings of hopelessness; sometimes leading to suicide
Time	Try to find meaningful ways to use time during school years	Try to find meaningful ways to use time during retirement years

From Donna Couper and Fran Pratt, *Learning for Longer Life*, National Academy for Teaching and Learning about Aging, 1999.