

# 2.8 WRITING A BILL

**Essential Question(s):** How do I write a bill?

## Overview

When a change in the law is desired, whether at the community, state, or national level, people need to understand the processes of making that desired change, a bill, into a law. Submitting a bill for consideration by the legislature involves writing, revising and sharing bills with a focus on passing them in a Senate hearing.

## Snapshot

### What Students Will Learn:

In this lesson, students will brainstorm to identify changes they believe are important for improving their school community. They will read a Sample Bill, examine a Bill Writing Template, and begin drafting their own bills as the first step toward legislation that will change some aspect of their school community.

### Standard(s):

D2.Civ.3.6-8

**Time:** 50 minutes





## Key Vocabulary

bill  
law  
legislation

## Objectives

- Brainstorm a list of changes they would like to see in their school community.
- Write a bill that could be passed through legislation.

## Differentiation

A template is available for student use. While this is an individual assignment it can also be done with partners.

## What's Needed

- Writing utensil and paper or 1:1 technology
- Board/smart board and markers
- Make copies of the “[Sample Bill](#)” and “[Bill Writing Template](#),” one of each for each student.

## Classroom Setup

As students will spend the second half of class working in pairs, the room should be arranged to best support paired work.

## Direct Teaching

1. Introduce the lesson by telling students that everyone has the right to propose legal changes that will improve their communities by submitting a bill for consideration by the legislature.
2. Ask students, “What are a few things you would like to change in our school community, including policies or rules? What laws would improve our school?” Record their ideas on the board/smart board.  
**Note:** If you previously conducted lesson “[2.6 What's a Bill?](#),” students can refer back to some of the ideas generated during that lesson.
3. Tell students they will be exploring some of the processes and format of writing a bill.
4. Distribute the “[Sample Bill](#)” to each student and explain that they will be writing a bill in a format that is similar to this draft. Instruct students to independently read the “[Sample Bill](#),” focusing less on the content of the Bill and more on the way the Bill is structured. Tell students that as they are reading, they should reflect and make notes on the following questions:
  - What do you notice about the structure of the Bill?
  - What questions does it raise for you?

5. As a whole class discussion, ask students to identify different parts of the “[Sample Bill](#)” including: purpose of the Bill; dates for implementation; definitions; consequences/fines if laws are violated; funding; who is responsible, etc.

Record those on the board/smart board so students understand key components they should include in their bills.

6. Distribute the “[Bill Writing Template](#)” to each student. Explain each section of the template to students.
7. Have students pair up and with their partner, make a quick decision about a change they want to make in school policy or rules (based on ideas generated at the start of class, or perhaps new ideas). Explain that once they have decided, they should use the remaining class time to write their bill based on that desired change and on the template model they explored.

Assign completion of this task for homework if they do not finish drafting their bills during class.

**Note:** It’s recommended students hold on to their drafted bills if you plan to teach lesson “[2.9 Editing a Bill](#).”

8. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What is one thing you learned about the bill writing process?
  - What is something that you struggled with?
  - What is something that was easier than you thought it would be?
  - Why draft a bill as part of the process of passing legislation?

## Closing

Ask students to write down one thing they are confident about with their assignment, and one question they have about their assignment.

# SAMPLE BILL

Introduced by: Chancellor Jonathan Bennett

Chicago, IL – West Chatham

March 29, 2019

AN ACT to require coloring books in all high schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS:

WHEREAS the school district has made a commitment to integrating social emotional learning (SEL) into every high school curriculum, it is important to identify strategies and approaches that support SEL in a way that is research-based and scalable.

Section 1: For the purpose of this bill, the following definitions shall apply:

Subsection A: "Coloring book" shall be defined as a book available to draw, paint and color in.

Subsection B: "High Schools" shall be defined as any school containing grades 9, 10, 11, 12.

Subsection C: "Appropriate times" shall be defined as any amount of time during the school day that teachers announce.

Section 2: The purpose of this bill is to require coloring books in all high schools. Current research has shown that coloring decreases stress and anxiety, leading to better social emotional health (SEL) and higher engagement. SEL and engagement have been shown to lead to better test scores on standardized tests and healthier students.

Section 3: Upon passage of this bill, the People of the State of Illinois shall be amended as follows:

Subsection A: Any high schooler in the grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 shall have the right to a coloring book during school. Students shall be able to openly color during appropriate times in school.

Section 4: This bill shall be funded by the Illinois Department of Education. The following are the regulations to be used by the department in order to fund it:

Subsection A: The Illinois Department of Education is responsible for ensuring that all high schools have the coloring books needed for one per student.

Subsection B: The Department of Education must allocate \$1.00 per high school student per school year.

Section 5: Any school who does not follow these laws shall be fined a fee of the amounts for no less than \$1.00 per student and no more than \$5.00 per student. The amount paid shall be determined by the State Superintendent of the Department of Education.

Section 6: This bill shall be enacted in the following school year upon passage.

# BILL WRITING TEMPLATE

1 PRINCIPLE AUTHOR

Introduced by: *(Your name)*  
*(Your school name and state)*

2 DATE

*Date*

3 NAME OF BILL

An Act to *(This is the name of the bill. Write a brief statement that explains what your bill will do if it is passed. Start the sentence with "An Act to")*

4 ENACTMENT CLAUSE

BE IT ENACTED BY *(Write the name of the committee or office (in all CAPS followed by a colon) that has the authority to approve this bill. Example: BE IT ENACTED BY THE CALVERT HIGH SCHOOL SCHOOL COMMITTEE IN THE STATE OF OHIO:)*

5 PREAMBLE

WHEREAS *(Provide your reasons for the necessity of your bill. Why is your topic something that should be addressed by the school? Start the sentence with "WHEREAS")*

6 SECTIONS

Section 1. *(Define words or phrases that are important to your bill. These are words where their meaning could be debated.)*

Section 2. *(Explain why the Bill is important.)*

Section 3. *(Explain what will happen if the Bill passes.)*

Section 4. *(Explain how the Bill will be funded.)*

Section 5. *(Explain what will happen if the Law is not followed.)*

Section 6. *(Provide detail as to when the Bill will go into effect.)*