

WHO MUST ATTEND SCHOOL?

OUTCOMES

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

- Explain the reasons for laws that require children to be educated
- Identify who must attend school

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Chalkboard / flipchart paper
- Chalk / markers

HANDOUT and TRANSPARENCY OR POSTER

- You Be The Judge
- School Attendance Requirements

PREPARING TO TEACH THIS LESSON

- Write up and post the lesson objectives
- Copy handouts and prepare all materials
- Know the school attendance rules for your community
- Decide if you are going to use the generic truancy law included in this lesson or if you want to use the actual school attendance law that governs your jurisdiction
- Make a poster or overhead transparency of the generic law in the lesson or of the school attendance law that governs your jurisdiction.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PEOPLE

Invite a school administrator, probation officer, or police officer who can talk about local school attendance laws. Send a copy of the lesson when you confirm the date, time, and location of the class. After he or she has received the lesson, discuss how you will work together to teach it.

SUMMARY

At the end of each lesson is a summary section. It is very important that you time the lesson carefully to allow sufficient time to complete the debrief (summary) with the students. During this reflection time the students can discuss the information learned, clarify any concerns and analyze the skills that they have practiced. This is a critical step in the learning process and must not be neglected.

PART ONE: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (50 minutes)

1

Share lesson outcomes with students and introduce the Community Resource Person if one is helping to teach this lesson.

2

Post either the “**Transparency/Poster 1: School Attendance Requirements**” which can be found at the end of this lesson plan. Or, if you prefer, distribute a copy of your jurisdiction’s school attendance law. Read the law aloud and confirm that students understand it.

3

Ask students the following questions:

- What does this law say?
- Is the law in your state different?
- Why do we have compulsory education laws (i.e., laws that require students to attend school)?
- Will everyone understand the law? Is it clear?
- Are there any exceptions to this law?
- Think about what motivated lawmakers to pass this law. Do you agree with their intentions? Why or why not?

4

Distribute “**Handout 1: You Be the Judge**” which can be found at the end of this lesson plan.

5

Ask a volunteer to read the directions at the top as others students read them silently. Then, do the first case together as a class.

Ask a volunteer to read about the case of Mary in #1. Then ask volunteers to help discuss the questions (and their answers) to questions a. – e. about Mary.

Confirm that students understand how to the rest of the situations on their own and then instruct students to begin completing the handout on their own. Tell them they have ten minutes. Write the ending time on the board.

Circulate around the room to help students and monitor their progress. Give a two-minute warning.

6

Divide students into groups of three to five. Tell students that they will work in groups to make a decision in each of these cases using the school attendance requirements. The groups will be given 10-15 minutes to answer the questions together and to reach a consensus.

Write the ending time on the board and then circulate around the room to answer any questions that the groups might have. Give a two-minute warning when time is nearly up.

7

After all of the groups have finished their discussions, ask the class:

- What could be some of the negative consequences for Mary, Michael, Cecilia, Karen, Matthew, Elizabeth, and Sung if they do not go to school?
- What could be the negative consequences for society if education is not compulsory (required)?

Then have each group report its decision in each case. After each group has given its decision for a particular case, inform students of the outcomes of judges in the real cases. Invite the Community Resource Person to lead this discussion if one is present.

1. Mary is 12 years old. She stays at home to baby-sit for her three brothers and sisters who are too young to attend school. Mary's mother works and does not make enough money to pay both a baby-sitter and the bills.

Mary would be required to attend school. It is not her responsibility to provide for the care of

her sisters and brothers. The law clearly says that all youth between the ages of five and 16 must attend school. Since she is between those ages, Mary must attend school.

- 2. Michel and his parents are from Haiti. Haiti is not in the United States. Michel and his family came to this country illegally. Michel is eight years old. He does not attend school because he thinks that the school will report him to the government. If the government finds out that he is here, they will send Michel and his family back to Haiti.**

Michel would be required to attend school. It does not matter that he is in the country illegally. All schools are required to give a free public education to everyone, regardless of where they came from or how they got to the United States. Schools may not require children to prove they are in the country legally.

- 3. Cecilia is from Argentina. She is ten years old and does not speak English. Cecilia does not understand the teacher or the other students. She is the only Spanish-speaking person in her school.**

Cecilia would be required to attend school, even if she cannot speak English. The school's staff members must take steps to provide Cecilia with an education. They may teach her in Spanish and English or they may choose another plan, but they cannot ignore Cecilia.

- 4. Karen is blind. Her parents think she will be teased at school for her disability and would rather not send her to school.**

Karen must attend school, even if she is blind. All children must attend school, even if they have a disability. The school's staff members will work with Karen's parents to make sure she is in a school where she can learn. They will decide what school Karen will attend. The school must provide Karen with services to help her learn. One kind of service the school may provide is someone to read Karen's books to her. There are also many other services.

- 5. Matthew is 15 years old. He is in the ninth grade, but he hates school. Matthew plans to drop out of school when he is 16. He does not attend regularly now.**

Matthew must attend school until he is 18. Matthew may be detained by the police if he drops out of school before the law says he may. He will be charged with truancy. Truancy is the failure to attend school. Parents can also be prosecuted for the crime of failing to send a child to school.

- 6. Elizabeth is fourteen years old. She finished the eighth grade, but refuses to attend high school because Elizabeth belongs to the Amish religion. The Amish believe in the simple way of life. Most Amish do not use automobiles, telephones, or electricity. They wear simple clothing and live on farms.**

Elizabeth's parents believe that if they send Elizabeth to high school, she will not want to remain Amish. They believe she will want to leave their religion and way of life.

Elizabeth is not required to attend school. According to a 1972 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, Elizabeth's right to practice her religion is more important than attending school for two more years. The Amish do a good job of preparing children for life in the Amish community. Elizabeth will receive additional instruction from her parents and her community. It is not clear, however, whether courts would allow this same exception for other groups.

7. Sung is 16 years old. He does well in school and likes it, but things are difficult at home. His father was injured on the job and cannot work. Sung's boss just offered him a full-time position where he could make a lot more money. Sung intends to drop out of school and help pay the bills so his mother will not have to work two jobs and so his younger brothers and sisters will have better opportunities than his parents.

Sung must attend school, even if his family is having financial difficulty. Sung's school counselor, a social worker, or a local government official may be able to put Sung's family in contact with social service agencies that can help them manage in this difficult time.

PART TWO: SUMMARY (10 minutes)

1

Ask students the following questions:

- How does this law apply to you?
- Is it fair? Why or why not?
- Why do states think education is so important that they have laws that require children between certain ages to attend school?
- Do schools have any responsibilities? What are they?

2

Have each student tell everyone one thing that he or she learned during the class.

3

Thank students for their participation. Thank the community resource person, too, if one is present.

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TRANSPARENCY/POSTER

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
REQUIREMENTS
FOR “ANYTOWN, USA”**

Every parent or guardian who lives in this city during the school year and who has custody of a child who has reached the age of five years shall place the child in regular attendance in a public or private school or in private instruction.

This responsibility of the parent lasts until the child reaches the age of 18 years.

HANDOUT

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Read each of the cases below. Answer the questions a – e that appear below for each of the situations.

- a. Retell the case in your own words.
 - b. Discuss the reasons the child in the case does not attend school.
 - c. Discuss the reasons the child in the case should attend school.
 - d. If you were a judge, would you require the child to attend school?
 - e. What reasonable changes might make it easier for this child to attend school?
-
1. Mary is 12 years old. She stays at home to baby-sit for her three brothers and sisters who are too young to attend school. Mary's mother works and does not make enough money to pay both a baby-sitter and the bills.
 2. Michel and his parents are from Haiti. Haiti is not in the United States. Michel and his family came to this country illegally. Michel is eight years old. He does not attend school because he thinks that the school will report him to the government. If the government finds out that he is here, they will send Michel and his family back to Haiti.
 3. Cecilia is from Argentina. She is ten years old and does not speak English. Cecilia does not understand the teacher or the other students. She is the only Spanish-speaking person in her school.
 4. Karen is blind. She is five years old. Karen's parents refuse to send her to school because they think the other children will make fun of her.

HANDOUT, continued

5. Matthew is 15 years old. He is in the ninth grade, but he hates school. Matthew plans to drop out of school when he is 16. He does not attend regularly now.

6. Elizabeth is 14 years old. She finished the eighth grade, but refuses to attend high school because Elizabeth belongs to the Amish religion. The Amish believe in a simple way of life. Most Amish do not use automobiles, telephones, or electricity. They wear simple clothing and live on farms. Elizabeth's parents believe that if they send Elizabeth to high school, she will not want to remain Amish. They believe she will want to leave their religion and way of life.

7. Sung is 16 years old. He does well in school and likes it, but things are difficult at home. His father was injured on the job and cannot work. Sung's boss just offered him a full-time position where he could make a lot more money. Sung intends to drop out of school and help pay the bills so his mother will not have to work two jobs and so his younger brothers and sisters will have better opportunities than his parents.

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