

The 49th Star Lesson Plan Ideas

Additional Lesson Plan Suggestions

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The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Alaska State Constitution provides an opportunity for Alaska teachers and students to take a closer look at not only the constitution, but the historical context in which it was written. Lesson plans which focus on this context, on the provisions of the constitution, and on the Alaskans who played leadership roles in the writing of the constitution are available on this website.

Listed here are lesson plan ideas rather than specific lesson plans. These ideas are intended to provide the teacher with a starting place from which to create lesson plans for individual students and classes. The ideas were generated from The 49th Star film and website. The film and website form a resource base for the lessons, although many other sources could also be utilized.

The lesson ideas described here could be developed into lessons for students at either middle school or high school levels.

Alaska Constitution Convention Delegates: A Geography Lesson
Alaska Constitutional Convention: A Photo Analysis
Alaska Constitutional Convention: Role of Women
Delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention: Who Was Your Delegate?
Alaska Constitutional Convention: Analysis of the Speeches
Alaska Constitutional Convention: Simulation

Lesson Plan Ideas

Alaska Constitution Convention Delegates: A Geography Lesson.

In this lesson students will identify the home community for each of the fifty-five convention delegates and plot these on an outline map of Alaska. The best outline map would be one that includes major rivers; students could use paper outline maps or generate maps using a computer program. All maps should

be made using these NGS map making guidelines: TODALS (title, orientation, date, author, legend, source). The maps may be displayed. Students should be guided to examine the maps and consider whether or not the constitution delegates provided an equitable geographic representation.

Extension mapping activity – Help students to locate Alaska population, density and distribution data for 1955 (contact the AK Department of Labor [907-465-2439] for 1950 census records). Have them make an Alaska population map that reflects this information. Compare this information to the delegate home community map. Ask students to examine whether or not the delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention constituted equitable representation based upon population distribution. Guide a discussion on how the delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention were selected.

Alaska Constitutional Convention: A Photo Analysis.

The photos and film footage in the Creating Alaska film and on the associated website offer an insight to life in the 1950's that is unfamiliar to most students. Archival photos and film provide a rich opportunity for students to look beyond the immediate topic of the primary source (in this case, the Alaska Constitutional Convention) and examine the photos and film for details that reveal how people of that era lived. Guide students to look at the photos and film footage multiple times and to document information related to: clothing styles, degree of formality in dress, means and styles of transportation, gender representation, gender roles, types of communication technology, health issues, use of space, furniture types, health issues. Ask students to draw conclusions about Alaska life in the mid-1950's based on their observations. Ask them to describe how they relate to the black/white images. Ask them to connect their observations to adults in their lives who are from that era. Conclude by asking students to imagine and describe a constitutional convention held today by using the above listed traits.

Extension – Ask students to list what issues might be discussed at a contemporary constitutional convention.

Alaska Constitutional Convention: Role of Women.

Six of the fifty-five delegates to the convention were women. Other women played critical supporting roles. Ask students to find out about these women. Who were they? How did they achieve the positions they held at the convention? What were their accomplishments at the convention? Have students contact Katie

Hurley to ask about the participation of women at the convention. Students could present their findings in a variety of formats: poster, biography, PowerPoint.

Delegates to the Alaska Constitutional Convention: Who Was Your Delegate?

This lesson would provide students the opportunity to identify the delegate who was from their geographic region of the territory. Once identified, ask students to collect information on this person from which to write a mini-biography, make an oral presentation, or create a computer presentation. Students should be guided to research and present information on: early life, occupation, education, interesting life experiences, selection as delegate, role at the convention, life after the convention, family/business ties to the region, current family members. Students may be able to contact current family members in the region to solicit information and photos, or in the case of the surviving delegates, students may be able to make direct contact.

Alaska Constitutional Convention: Analysis of the Speeches

The Creating Alaska website includes transcripts of speeches given by statehood advocates in the years prior to the convention, during the convention, and after the convention as the Statehood Committee advanced the statehood cause in Congress. The speeches range from those given by the delegates, to business leaders, supporters from outside Alaska, members of Congress, and even the Nenana High School student body president. The speeches vary in complexity, detail, and length, but can be examined by students for message, perspective, purpose, and effectiveness. Individual students, or teams of students, could examine one speech and describe it to the class, including excerpts to provide evidence of its message. Students could create a class timeline of the speeches, and then the presentations could be scheduled to match the sequence of the speeches. Recitation of speeches, or excerpts, could be integrated with English/language arts classes.

Alaska Constitutional Convention: Simulation

This lesson would allow students the opportunity to role play the parts of individual convention delegates in a simulation of the seventy-five day convention. It would be necessary for the teacher to create a skeleton script for the students which would outline the chronology of the convention,

highlighting the major issues and the discussions that accompanied them. Each student would research his/her delegate and assume that role during the simulation. The teacher would need to establish a time and place for the simulation, and provide historically accurate props. Students would be expected to dress for their roles. This activity would take several days to research and plan; the simulation should occur in one block of time (about two hours). Students should be familiar with both the delegate and convention issues to be able to speak confidently and accurately without having to refer to a precisely worded script. They could read or recite from actual debate or speeches from the convention. This simulation could be adjusted for various numbers of students, for example, it could be enacted by one class (with only roles for the major players) or combined classes (roles for delegates and support staff). Other students could play roles as reporters and/or concerned citizens. Success of this simulation is incumbent upon the teacher being very well versed in the history of the convention in order to guide the students. Teacher planning would be extensive, but simulations are among the most effective learning activities for students.