Capitol Hill Day

On February 5, 2020, a group of students toured the State Capitol, met with elected officials, and advocated for adult education. These students are currently enrolled in classes with IU13 Community Education and the Literacy & Learning Success Center in Lancaster and Lebanon Counties.

To prepare for the field trip, classes learned about state government, discussed their role in the democratic process, and composed letters to their elected officials. Nearly 100 letters were written by students outlining their experiences and highlighting how adult education has changed their lives.

Dear Representative Miller,

I am a student at the Lancaster-Lebanon IU13 Community Education program in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. I am studying English Level 1. In the future I would like to become a citizen and get a driver’s license.

Adult education has helped me to speak English with my neighbors. Please support adult education! Thank you!

I am studying English. It is my goal to learn English, and adult education has helped me find work at Nissin Foods.

Please support adult education! Thank you.

I am studying English. It is my goal to learn in the future I would like to a teacher.

Adult education has helped me improve my English. Please support adult education!

Examples of Student Letters

A small group of students, including members of student government, hand delivered the letters to offices at the Capitol, where they took a guided tour of the building.

At the Capitol, students and staff took a guided tour of the building. Select students and staff also had the opportunity to meet with Representative Michael Sturla, and sit on the back of the House floor to watch the House of Representatives in session.

This event is the first step in our advocacy effort to help our elected officials understand that adult learners are more than outcomes and numbers. They are real people, holding down jobs, raising families, and attending classes to improve their lives.

It is critical that all adult education programs in Pennsylvania connect their learners to their senators and representatives. You can do what we did and take a trip to Harrisburg. Or, you can visit them in their local offices. Invite them to your classes and events.

In 2021, the PAACE Conference will be held in Harrisburg with the goal of making advocacy a key focus of the experience.
IU13 and the Literacy & Learning Success Center students and staff pose outside the Capitol building.

An IU13 HSE student shares stories from class and discusses his professional goals with his elected official, Representative Keith Greiner.

ESOL and HSE students pose with Representative Keith Greiner.

IU13 and the Literacy & Learning Success Center students and staff listen during a guided tour of the state Capitol building.
What is a Commonwealth?
A Commonwealth refers to the “weal” or well-being of the public. It is of English origin and most likely came from the early colony of William Penn. This region later became the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Legally, there are no major differences between the term Commonwealth and state. There are three other Commonwealths in the United States: Virginia, Kentucky, and Massachusetts.

The Pennsylvania Branches of Government
Pennsylvania state government is made up of the Legislature, the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch.

State Government
The Legislature (General Assembly)
The Pennsylvania Legislature, also known as the General Assembly, has two parts that consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The main role of the Legislature is to write (draft), change (amend), and pass laws in Pennsylvania. There are 50 Senators in the Senate and 203 Representatives in the House of Representatives. All members of the Pennsylvania Legislature are elected. Senators serve a term of four years while Representatives serve a two year term.

The Executive Branch
The Executive Branch must carry out the laws passed by the Legislature. Both elected (the Governor and Lt. Governor) and appointed officials (cabinet secretaries) make up the Executive Branch.

The Judicial Branch
The main job of the Judicial Branch is to understand (or to “interpret”) and apply the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. At the top of the Judicial Branch is the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court. Every court in Pennsylvania falls under the supervision of the Supreme Court.

Local Government
The Role of Local Government
Cities, boroughs and townships make up the 2,562 municipalities in Pennsylvania. Their job is to provide for the public health, safety, and welfare of their residents. Municipalities are important because many of the services they have are not usually provided by the private sector. Historically, municipalities have been responsible for the upkeep of roads and making sure there is public safety by police and firefighting protection. Local government may also provide sewer, water, and trash collection services.

Examples of local ordinances, or local laws, include the removal of public nuisances; rules (called codes) for an improved quality of life (weed control, removal of non-registered vehicles, and animal control, are examples); and aesthetic improvements such as land development and zoning ordinances.

Pennsylvania residents have a voice at the local level and can help set a vision for their community. Residents, through their elected officials, are able to have a major effect on services provided to their community. They can urge their elected officials to support cultural activities, parks and recreation, senior centers, museums, and other important services.

There are five primary types of municipalities included in the Pennsylvania Constitution: Counties, Cities, Boroughs, Incorporated Towns, and Townships.
How State and Local Governments Work Together
All three branches of State Government work with counties, cities, boroughs, townships, and school districts in Pennsylvania. First, the legislators work with the citizens they represent. Legislators bridge the gap between the residents they represent and the state government, working to make sure their needs are being heard and addressed.

The Executive Branch serves communities through the state agencies it oversees. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) provides financial assistance, technical assistance, and training for municipalities in Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) provides municipalities with transportation and engineering information and services.

Vocabulary List

Phrasal Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>My Sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>carry out</td>
<td>To do something that needs to be organized and planned</td>
<td>The wizard <strong>carried out</strong> his evil plan to kidnap all the town children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make up</td>
<td>Form something</td>
<td>Men <strong>make up</strong> only a small percentage of the teaching staff.</td>
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Other Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>elect</td>
<td>(v) To choose someone by voting</td>
<td>We <strong>elect</strong> the president of the USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>term</td>
<td>(n) A fixed period of time</td>
<td>The murderer had a 60-year prison <strong>term</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervision</td>
<td>(n) When you are in charge and make sure things are done correctly</td>
<td>He finished all the work under my <strong>supervision</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>welfare</td>
<td>(n) Health and happiness</td>
<td>I am worried about the child’s <strong>welfare</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide</td>
<td>(v) To give something to somebody</td>
<td>I will <strong>provide</strong> food at the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nuisance</td>
<td>(n) Something very annoying</td>
<td>My neighbor’s dogs are always barking; they are a <strong>nuisance</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aesthetic</td>
<td>(adj) Connected with beauty</td>
<td>People want flowers in their yard for <strong>aesthetic</strong> reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>urge</td>
<td>(v) Strongly suggest somebody do something</td>
<td>He <strong>urged</strong> me to stop smoking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elected officials</td>
<td>(n) People who work in our government who we voted for</td>
<td>Donald Trump is an <strong>elected official</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td>(v) Say that you agree with an idea, group, or person</td>
<td>I <strong>support</strong> equal treatment for all.</td>
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Reading Questions

• First, read the sentences below and make a prediction or guess about the answer.
• Next, talk to your partner about your answers.
• Then, read the text and answer the questions again.
• When you have finished, highlight the answers in the story.
• Last, talk about the questions again with a partner. Did your answers change? Show your partner the evidence in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>My Answers BEFORE</th>
<th>My Answers AFTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A state and a commonwealth have different forms of government.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Pennsylvania state government is made up of the General Assembly,</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Executive Branch, and the Judicial Branch.</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The legislative is made up of the Senate and the House of Representatives.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The General Assembly can write, but not change laws.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There are 203 Representatives in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Senators serve a term of 6 years.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Local government is made up of many municipalities.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There are only three types of municipalities.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Many of the services provided by municipalities are also provided by private businesses.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
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Bonus
The word term is used in the article three times. There are two different meanings to the word term. Find and highlight the word term in the article. What are the two different meanings?
Using Educate & Elevate With Your Students

Adapt these lesson ideas to help your students email their elected officials!

Introduction
Use other resources in this collection or create your own to talk to students about how adult education is funded and how advocacy and lobbying can impact funds.

Prepare to Write
Share this example letter with the class. Talk about how you could add stories or experiences to make it more personal.

* Message Subject:

Adult Education Changed My Life

Dear [Recipients],

* Your Message:

Adult Education is important! It helped me in so many ways. It gave me hope; it made it possible for me to accomplish things I never thought were possible. Please support Adult Education!

* Your Closing

Sincerely,

* Your Name

Silvia Hildesheim

Ask students to draft their own letters or add more information to the sample. Give feedback on writing or have students engage in peer review.
Sending the Email
Use the website: http://cqrcengage.com/coabe/home

Find and click on the below link for students.

Help students enter the following information. Potentially talk to your class about when it is and is not a good idea to enter personal information on websites.

The email will automatically populate. Students can edit the body of the email directly on the web page before hitting submit.