

## Analyzing Interest Groups

**OVERVIEW:** Students take and analyze roles, prepare visuals, and give oral presentations. The class analyzes the self-interests and common interests of people in the river community.



**OBJECTIVES:**

- To define self-interest
- To understand the diversity of self interests relative to water and land use on the river system
- To analyze individual and group roles to determine concerns relative to water and land use on the river system
- To analyze common interests relative to the future well-being of the river system

**Procedures—Part I**

1. **Distribute Handout 3, What are Self-interests and Interest Groups?** Have students read the material. Then, discuss the meaning of self-interest and **interest groups**. Call upon students to offer their own examples of **self-interest** and **interest groups**. Discuss the role of citizens and interest groups in formulating **public policy**.
2. Explain to students that they will be assigned individual roles representing different interests regarding water and land use along the Rio Grande.

Define **role playing** for the class. Be sure they understand it is an important instructional technique. Their task is to try to seriously and honestly represent the fictitious person they have been assigned.

3. Divide the class into the following groups:
  - The Pueblos (3)
  - Food Growers (4)
  - Leisure Recreation (4)
  - Commercial Recreation (2)

**Materials:**

- **Handout 3, What are Interest Groups?** (photocopy one for each student)
- **Handout 4, Role Profiles** (photocopy one set for the class)
- **Handout 6, Understanding Other Interest Groups** (photocopy one for each student)

**Time:**

One Class Period

**Vocabulary:**

self interest  
interest groups  
common interest  
common good  
public policy

**Suggestions:**

There are a total of 28 role profiles. You may want to create signs identifying each group.

If you need additional roles, assign students to serve as news reporters. Explain to the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmentalists (4)</li> <li>• Business &amp; Industry (4)</li> <li>• Cities, Towns, and Villages (3)</li> <li>• State, Federal Agencies (4)</li> </ul> <p>4. Within each group, assign individual students their roles from <b>Handout 4, Role Profiles</b>. Allow time for students to read their roles. You may want to ask students to tell the class something about the roles they represent.</p> <p>5. Give each student a copy of <b>Handout 6, Understanding Other Interest Groups</b>. Allow time for students to work together to complete the chart. Explain to the class that the chart will be used to prepare their illustration of the group's interest and their oral presentation.</p>	<p>reporters that their role is to observe the process, interview interest groups, write news stories and editorials, and draw political cartoons. The news reporters should share and discuss their perspective with the class.</p> <p>If you need to eliminate roles, you may omit roles numbered 6, 11, 16, or 28.</p> <p>There are three key issues that should emerge from the role profiles and student discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) the quantity of available water is limited, and some groups want to change how it is allocated;</li> <li>(2) the quality of surface and ground water is deteriorating and action should be taken to reverse the contamination;</li> <li>(3) the bosque is in decline because of pollutants and land use changes, and action should be taken to stabilize the environment.</li> </ul> <p>Outlining the issues for the students may help them gain some perspective on their interest groups.</p>
<p><b>Procedures—Part II</b></p> <p>1. Give each interest group a segment of butcher paper, newsprint, etc., and markers. Explain to the class that the group task is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a visual illustrating the uses and interests represented in the group. Their drawing should illustrate the sections in the role profiles entitled "What are my uses and interests in the river system?" and "How does my use or interest affect the river system?" At the bottom of the drawing, students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butcher paper or newsprint</li> <li>• Crayons or color markers</li> </ul> <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>One Class Period</p> <p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>Keep each group's visual posted for the remainder of the simulation to serve as a quick reference when needed.</p> <p>You may want to have the groups draw their illustrations on one continuous sheet of butcher paper for ease of display, especially</p>

<p>should write about why their group is important.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare an oral presentation explaining to the class: (1) their drawing, (2) how they use and affect the river system, and (3) the group's concerns about water and land use on the Rio Grande.</li> </ul>	<p>if more than one class is participating in this activity.</p>
<p><b>Procedures—Part III</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allow each of the groups 5 to 6 minutes to post their visual and to make their oral presentation.</li> <li>2. Before beginning the presentations, give each student a copy of <b>Handout 6, Understanding Other Interest Groups</b>. Explain to the class that the boxes on the sheet are for note taking. While the presentations are being given, they should fill in the boxes labeled "Importance," "Use or Interest," "Effects," and "Concerns." You may wish to tell them that these notes will be useful when they participate in the problem-solving portion of the unit.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Handout 6, Understanding Other Interest Groups</b>. (photocopy one for each student)</li> </ol> <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>One class period</p>
<p><b>Procedures—Part IV</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. After the presentations, ask students to reassemble in their interest groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the notes taken during the presentations, ask them to identify some common uses and interests in the river system. List their responses on the board.</li> <li>• From the box labeled "Concerns" on Handout 6, ask the students to identify possible conflicts among the groups, e.g., the Food</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Materials:</b></p> <p><b>Handout 7, What is the Common good?</b> (photocopy one for each student)</p> <p><b>Time:</b></p> <p>One class period</p> <p><b>Suggestions:</b></p> <p>It is important for students to understand the conflict among the interest groups. Which groups might think similarly, and which groups might oppose your interests. This analysis will make the next activity more lively, and it will force them to make choices between self interest and the common good.</p> <p><b>Homework assignment:</b> Ask each student</p>

groups, e.g., the Food Growers are opposed to giving up any of their water to the Cities, Towns, 8 Villages.

2. Ask the students to suggest points of **common interest**, e.g., most everyone is interested in having clean water and a healthier bosque. You may want to talk to the class about **sustainability**, the future well-being of the river system, and the importance of a healthy river to the entire community. Ask students to identify some examples of self-interests that might have a negative impact on the sustainability of the river system. List their responses on the board.
3. **Distribute Handout 7, What is the Common Good?** Allow time for the students to read the material. Then, discuss the meaning of the **common good**. Call upon students to offer examples of the common good and civic issues. This will be a good opportunity to refocus on sustainability. Discuss the role of compromise in formulating **public policy**.

to write a brief essay identifying one's self interest related to the river system that he or she would find very difficult to sacrifice for the common good. Explain why, and what conditions might cause them to change their positions.



# THE RIVER SIMULATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHERS

## INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of citizenship education is the widespread participation of citizens in the governance of their localities, states, and the nation. To do so effectively, citizens must be knowledgeable, competent, and committed to the principles of a constitutional democracy.

This simulation culminates a study of the ecology of the Rio Grande and the human communities it supports. Through science, language arts, and social science students acquired knowledge about the river system and the human activities that influence the well-being of the river. At this juncture, students apply their learning in analyzing the problems their community faces relative to the sustainability of the Rio Grande and the bosque. It is through this culminating activity that students begin to acquire some of the competencies necessary for effective and responsible citizenship.

The design of this series of lessons gives students practice in resolving an issue in their local community. It simulates the process whereby public policy is formulated. The final outcome of the simulation is the creation of a plan of action that responds to a community need. It is hoped that through participating in this process, students will develop the commitment and resolve to share their ideas with community leaders or to actually translate their ideas into action.

Four easy steps accomplish the goals of this activity. Each step achieves specific instructional objectives that sequentially develop the process of deciding public policy issues. The part of step four that calls upon the students to present their plan of action to the community is optional. Students may, instead, choose to make a commitment to implement the plan. The final decision, of course, is up to the teacher after weighing a variety of considerations. It must be remembered that this is a simulation with all the inherent drawbacks of this instructional method.

## INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To understand the concept of community and the role of citizens in formulating policy decisions.  
Key concepts include: **self interest, interest groups, common interest, common good, political process, public policy, compromise**
2. To apply the key concepts in analyzing the role of river users and in determining the common good relative to the river environment
3. To create a community plan of action to solve an identified problem relate to water or land use on the river system
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan in terms of specific criteria related to the key concepts, and to share the action plan with decision-makers in the community
5. To value the decision-making process, the community, and the river environment; and, to make a reasoned commitment to active citizenship participation in community affairs
6. To integrate a wide range of knowledge and critical thinking skills with the decision-making process.

