

Alternative to Activity 4 The American Flag (with no guest speaker)

In this activity, students will learn about the evolution of the U.S. flag, its symbols, and President Eisenhower's contribution to the current day flag.

Materials needed:

- display of flag ideas/designs that were submitted circa 1958, obtained from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/flag.html
- display of U.S. flags through time that we have; apparatus to display them
- white paper and colored pencils/crayons

1. Inform students of the following Eisenhower-U.S. flag-Executive Branch connection:

“From the first year of Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Presidency, the public had anticipated that Alaska and Hawaii might be added as new states and that a new flag design would be needed. The arrangement of the stars in the United States flag is a function of the Executive branch of the government. And who was in charge of the Executive branch of the government? (PRESIDENT EISENHOWER!)”

5
minutes

The earliest submission of a 50-star flag design came in 1953, but the bulk of the submissions began pouring in after the admission of Alaska in 1958. By the time the official design was declared for the 50-star flag, more than 3,000 people had sent in their ideas. The designs came in a wide range of media from simple pencil sketches to professionally constructed flags. This was an especially popular project for elementary school children who expressed their ideas with construction paper, crayons, paint and tiny stick-on stars. You will see (or have seen) examples of flag designs sent with letters to President Eisenhower in your other activities today. Here are several other flag ideas that were submitted.”

2. Inform students of the evolution of the United States flag. Be sure to hit on the following points:

5
minutes

- On June 14, 1777, in order to establish an official flag for the new nation, the Continental Congress passed the first Flag Act: "Resolved, That the flag of the United States be made of thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation."
- Executive Order of President Taft dated June 24, 1912 - established proportions of the flag and provided for arrangement of the stars in six horizontal rows of eight each, a single point of each star to be upward. Point out this flag on display.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated January 3, 1959 - This created a 49 Star flag for the addition of Alaska. It provided for the arrangement of the stars in seven rows of seven stars each, staggered horizontally and vertically.
- Executive Order of President Eisenhower dated August 21, 1959 - This created a 50 Star flag for the addition of Hawaii. It provided for the arrangement of the stars in nine rows of stars staggered horizontally and eleven rows of stars staggered vertically. This made Eisenhower the only president to sit under three different American flags. Point out this flag on display.
- Symbolism of the flag: 13 stripes = 13 original colonies; # of stars = # of states; red = hardiness and valor; white = purity and innocence; blue = vigilance, perseverance, and justice.

3. Students create 51 star flags. The United States has 13 other “territories,” just the same as Hawaii and Alaska prior to being granted full statehood. Suppose another territory becomes our 51st state. What suggestion would you have for our new flag?

15
minutes