

THE GOVERNOR'S VOICE

Conference Theme and the State of the State

CIVICS

GOVERNMENT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

PUBLIC SPEAKING

LEADERSHIP

AT A GLANCE

GRADES	9-12 (adaptable for younger students)
TIME	Four sessions, each 30 minutes long.
HANDOUTS	1. The State of the State: Four Parts; 2. Theme Worksheet; 3. Service Focus Statement; 4. Sample Past Themes to Spark Ideas

THE STORY PROBLEM

Storybook County has had a hard year: houses blown down, a great fall from a wall, a giant in the airspace, a twenty-year nap. The new Governor must name what the county stands for and tell the Legislature which bills matter most.

► THE PROCESS PRACTICED

Executive leadership and communication. The Youth Governor is the lead Presiding Officer of a YMCA Youth and Government conference. The Governor chooses a theme for the year (past themes have included kindness, curiosity, unity and initiative), writes three five-minute speeches (Opening, State of the State and Closing), endorses a slate of bills in the State of the State, and writes the welcome letter in the bill book. The Lieutenant Governor chooses a service focus for the year. Students practice all of it as the Governor of Storybook County.

► LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to choose a theme that is specific, positive and tied to a core value, and explain the choice.
- Students will be able to draft a short State of the State speech with the four standard parts: where we are, what we value, what we will do (endorsed bills), and a call to action.
- Students will be able to endorse bills with reasons, not slogans.
- Students will be able to deliver a speech within a time limit using gavel time signals.
- Students will be able to write a one-paragraph Lieutenant Governor's service focus statement.

► MATERIALS:

- Handout: "The State of the State: Four Parts" (Supporting Document 1)
- Handout: "Theme Worksheet" (Supporting Document 2)
- Handout: "Service Focus Statement" (Supporting Document 3)
- The class bill book (bills from earlier lessons) or the Sample Bill list from the Governor's Cabinet lesson
- Timer and gavel

► PRE-PLANNING:

- Every student writes a State of the State as if they were Governor; the class then hears a sample of them in Session 4. If a class Governor has already been chosen, that student also delivers the Opening speech.
- Pair each student with a writing partner for feedback.

SESSION 1 CHOOSING A THEME

30 MINUTES

- 5** **Hook.** Read three or four one-word themes from past Youth Governors (kindness, curiosity, unity, community) and ask what a theme is for. A theme is a lens the whole conference looks through, and it gives speakers, press and delegates one shared idea.
- 10** **Theme Worksheet.** Students complete the worksheet: name the biggest problem Storybook County faced this year; name the core value most needed to face it (caring, honesty, respect, responsibility); write a two or three word theme; write one sentence connecting the theme to a specific story event.
- 10** **Share and Test.** Partners trade worksheets and test each theme with three questions: Could a press reporter put it in a headline? Could a bill sponsor connect their bill to it? Does it say something, or could it fit any year?
- 5** **Revise.** Students refine their theme.

SESSION 2 DRAFTING THE STATE OF THE STATE

30 MINUTES

- 5** **The Four Parts.** Walk through Supporting Document 1 with examples. Where we are (the great fall, the straw houses). What we value (the theme). What we will do (name three to five bills and why). Call to action (what every delegate should do this session).
- 20** **Draft.** Students write a speech of 350 to 450 words, which is about three minutes aloud. They must endorse at least three bills from the class bill book by number and title, giving one reason each.
- 5** **Partner Check.** Partners confirm all four parts are present and every endorsement has a reason.

SESSION 3 DELIVERY AND THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

30 MINUTES

- 10** **Delivery Practice.** Partners read to each other with a timer. The listener gives one gavel tap at 30 seconds remaining and two at 15, the real conference signal. Speakers practice finishing on time.
- 10** **Service Focus.** Explain the Lieutenant Governor's role: senior parliamentarian and leader of the year's service focus. Students write a one-paragraph service focus statement for Storybook County that names a need from a story (rebuilding after the wolf, bringing meals to the Cratchits, a wall safety awareness week) and one measurable goal.
- 10** **Pair Share.** Partners exchange service focus statements; each writes one sentence on how a delegation could take part.

SESSION 4 THE OPENING SESSION

30 MINUTES

- 3** **Call to Order.** A student Presiding Officer opens the Storybook County Opening Session. Sergeant at Arms announces "The Governor of Storybook County."

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Speeches. Four to six volunteers (or students chosen by lot) deliver their State of the State to the chamber, three minutes each with gavel signals. Members listen as delegates: after each speech they write the theme in one phrase and the bills endorsed. A show of placards after each speech indicates whether the theme was clear.

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Wrap-Up. Collect all speeches. Discuss: which theme would you want to work under for a whole year, and why?

► ASSESSMENT

Theme Specific, positive, tied to a core value and to a story event.	20
Structure All four parts present and in a sensible order.	25
Endorsements At least three bills named correctly, each with a reason that connects to the theme.	25
Delivery Within time; audible; eye contact; responded to gavel signals.	20
Service Focus Statement Names a need, names a goal that can be measured.	10

► DIFFERENTIATION

Support

Provide a fill-in speech frame with sentence starters for each of the four parts. Allow a two-minute speech.

Challenge

Require the speech to anticipate and answer one objection to an endorsed bill, or to weave the theme into all four parts without repeating the exact phrase more than twice.

THE STATE OF THE STATE: FOUR PARTS

Part 1. Where we are. Two or three sentences on the year Storybook County has had. Be concrete: name the events. "This spring a resident of Nursery Rhyme Village fell from a public wall and could not be put together again."

Part 2. What we value. Introduce the theme and connect it to a core value. "This year I ask every delegate to act with responsibility: to each other, to our neighbors in the Deep Woods, and to the walls we sit on."

Part 3. What we will do. Endorse three to five bills by number and title, one reason each. "I ask the Assembly to pass A-2, the Humpty Dumpty Wall Safety Act, because a guardrail is cheaper than a kingdom's worth of horses."

Part 4. Call to action. One thing every delegate should do. "Before you vote on any bill this weekend, ask who in our county is on the other side of the wall."

Optional: a final sentence returning to the theme.

THEME WORKSHEET

The biggest problem Storybook County faced this year: _____

The core value most needed to face it (caring, honesty, respect, responsibility): _____

My theme (two or three words): _____

One sentence connecting my theme to a story event: _____

Headline test: could a reporter use it? Y / N Bill test: could a sponsor connect to it? Y / N Specific test: could it fit any year? Y / N

SERVICE FOCUS STATEMENT (LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR)

As Lieutenant Governor of Storybook County, my service focus this year is _____ (name the need and the story it comes from). Delegations can take part by _____. By the end of the year we will _____ (a measurable goal, such as hours served, meals delivered or walls inspected).

SAMPLE PAST THEMES TO SPARK IDEAS

Lead with Kindness. Staying Curious. Pathways Toward Progress. Unity. Taking Initiative. Community. Students should not copy these; they are here to show the size and tone of a theme.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Storybook County Lesson Plans use public domain stories to practice real YMCA Youth and Government processes: bills, committees, debate, courts, elections, service, and proposals. Every lesson is three or four 30-minute sessions, and all of them live in one folder:

drive.google.com/drive/folders/1MieLDxVzKNq7QTWjw2EPFDqgMOaaJ2US. Part of the YMCA Youth and Government Educator Toolkit at nysyag.org. Questions: Drew Caldwell, dcaldwell@ymcanys.org.