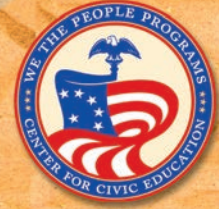




PROJECT Citizen



Making Curfew Laws More Effective

Many cities and towns have curfew laws that limit how late young people can be out by themselves. These laws are meant to prevent juvenile crime. In Plainfield, New Jersey, enforcing the 10 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. curfew was a major problem for police. The city council decided to temporarily suspend the city's curfew law in order to re-evaluate it. To help the council improve the curfew law, Project Citizen students in Ms. Brenda Noble's class shared their research and recommendations.

Community Connection The students wanted to know why enforcing the curfew was a problem. Was the law reasonable? The students surveyed friends and family members about their knowledge of and opinions about curfews. They then moved on to telephone interviews with a larger number of randomly chosen citizens, which yielded more representative data. The students also talked to local officials in Plainfield and in other communities to gather general information on curfew laws.

Taking Action The students' survey showed that most citizens and public officials believed that curfews helped reduce juvenile crime and protect young people from harm. However, the Plainfield police faced a major problem enforcing the curfew: Many parents and teenagers in Plainfield were unaware of the law. Students explained to officials that they needed to teach the public about the curfew. The students also suggested that Plainfield's curfew needed more flexibility. For example, they recommended later curfew times on the weekends and for older teenagers who might be working. The students' recommendations won the support of the city council and the public.



Many communities have curfews prohibiting young people from being out past certain hours.

go.hrw.com

Project Citizen

KEYWORD: S27 CH16

SERVICE LEARNING

1. How did the students adjust their research methods to get more accurate data?
2. What programs exist or could be started to reduce juvenile crime in your community?