*Civics Career Academy Support Lesson*

**Simulation Activity: School Board Decision on 4-Day School Weeks**

Why does social group membership affect leadership and participation in public and non-profit decision-making?

*A Short Activity for Civics Career Academy Course ‘Public Service Leadership*

***Course***

**Public Service Leadership**

***Benchmark***

| SS.912.S.4.1 | Describe how individuals are affected by the different social groups to which they belong. |
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| SS.912.S.4.2 | Identify major characteristics of social groups familiar to the students. |
| 06.03 | Identify the required elements of an effective meeting. |
| 06.04 | Describe how meeting elements are used to engage in public leadership. |
| SS.912.CG.2.12 | Explain how interest groups, the media and public opinion influence local, state and national decision-making related to public issues. |

***Course Unit*Unit 5 Communities and Collective Situations**

***Lesson Foci***Identify the core elements of effective meetings to support public and non-profit leadership.

Review and evaluate the dynamics of decision-making and understand how different social interest groups influence the process.

***Activity Documents, Materials, and Handouts***

Role cards

Timer

Gavel or bell (optional)

***Activity Vocabulary***

| Agenda - a list of items to be discussed at a formal meetingCivic engagement - individual or group activity addressing issues of public concernPublic servant - a person who is appointed or elected; includes any local, state or federal government employeesPublic trust - It is within the public where true power and future of a society lie; therefore, whatever trust citizens place in its officials must be respected.Social groups - two or more people who interact with one another, share similar characteristics, and collectively have a sense of unityNon-profit leadership - The leadership of a nonprofit is primarily its board of directors which is responsible for strategic planning, financial oversight, fundraising, and hiring other leadership roles such the executive directorNon-profit sector - A nonprofit organization is one that is not driven by profit but by dedication to a given cause that is the target of all income beyond what it takes to run the organization. Because of this, non-profit organizations receive tax-exempt status from the federal government which means that they are not required to pay income tax. |
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***Teacher Note***

Teachers may want to become familiar with [Robert’s Rules of Order](http://www.rulesonline.com/rror--00.htm) or some other such parliamentary procedure.

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***Lesson Steps***

1. Prior to the activity, set up the simulation area by arranging the space to resemble a school board meeting. For example, use a table for the school board members and provide seating for the interest groups.

*Note:**A teacher may want to show students a functioning public meeting prior to conducting the simulation so students have a working understanding of parliamentary procedures in action. Videos of public meetings are archived at The Florida Channel at thefloridachannel.org/videos .*

1. Begin the simulation by explaining the context and objective: “*The school board is considering implementing a 4-day school week to address budget constraints and improve student outcomes. Emphasize that this decision will impact all stakeholders present. After all arguments for and against are heard, the school board members will cast their votes “yes” or “no”. The decision passes with ⅔ vote from the board. The meeting will adhere to the parliamentary rules you have in front of you.”*

*Note: The teacher may elect to use the mock parliamentary rules included in this lesson, or use/modify existing parliamentary rules.*

1. Distribute the role cards and mock parliamentary rules: Assign each participant a role card, either as a school board member or as part of an interest group. Ask them to familiarize themselves with their role and the interests they represent. Groups should be given time before the simulation to prepare talking points.

Roles:

1. Moderator. May be either a student or the teacher. The moderator starts the meeting by outlining the agenda and explaining the rules of engagement. The moderator must make sure that speakers stick to their time limits, and may use the gavel or bell to indicate when time has been exceeded.
2. Secretary: Responsible for taking the meeting minutes. This role can be combined with the moderator role.
3. School Board Chair. This person calls the meeting to order and adjourns the meeting. The superintendent recognizes speakers, and other members of the board who want to speak. The superintendent is the deciding vote in the event there is a tie.
4. School board members. The number of school board members is flexible depending on class size. School board members are encouraged to present their own perspectives and engage in discussions with interest groups. They’re subject to time as well.
5. Interest groups. The number and composition of interest groups is flexible.

Possible interest groups (as a "pre-extension" activity students might create these interest groups with names and missions rather than use these):

* Parents4Change:These are parents who want the board to vote YES on 4-day school weeks. Their primary concern is the students’ well-being and academic performance.
* Working Hands-on Organization of Parents (WHOOP): These are parents who want the board to vote NO on 4-day school weeks. Their focus is on childcare.
* Teachers Association: These are teachers who want the board to vote YES on 4-day school weeks. They might focus on issues such as workload and professional development.
* Teaching Corps: These are parents who want the board to vote NO on 4-day school weeks. Their concerns range from potential impacts on teacher-student interactions, to lack of instructional time.
* Students Collaborating for Outreach and Participation (SCOOP): These are students who want the board to vote YES on 4-day school weeks. They may consider factors like access to extracurricular activities or community programs, transportation, and the overall impact on the student experience.
* Students Taking Ownership and Power (STOP): These are students who want the board to vote NO on 4-day school weeks. Their principal concerns might include scheduling conflicts, access to extracurricular activities, and the overall effect on the student experience.
* Chamber of Commerce: This organization represents local businesses who want the board to vote NO on 4-day school weeks. They are emphasizing economic implications on the community including impacts to parental work schedules.
* Local Area Business Organization for Revitalization (LABOR): This organization represents local businesses who want the board to vote YES on 4-day school weeks. They are emphasizing economic implications on the community including teenagers’ access to part time work.
* Neighborhood Watch: This organization represents community members who want the board to vote NO on 4-day school weeks because they’re worried about students not having enough to occupy their time and then getting into mischief.
1. Voting and decision-making: After ample discussion, ask the school board members to cast their votes on the 4-day school week proposal. Record the decision on a flipchart or whiteboard.
2. Assessment: Facilitate a post-simulation discussion to debrief the experience. Encourage students to reflect on how the different roles and interests influenced the decision-making process, using the reflection sheet at the end of this lesson plan. Discuss questions such as:
* How did the role you played influence your decision-making?
* Did you consider the interests of other groups? Why or why not?
* How did the interest groups influence the school board members' decision-making process?
* Were there any challenges in reaching a consensus or making a decision?
* What can be learned from this simulation about the role of leadership and participation in decision-making?

**Enrichment Suggestion** **#1** –

Encourage students to attend a local public meeting, and write a detailed report summarizing their observations and analysis which may include elements such as a summary of main topics and discussions as well as key decisions or actions, and a reflection on the meeting which analyzes its significance for the community taking into consideration the potential impact of the decisions made or the issues discussed. Students will make a short presentation to the class about their experience and what they learned about government decision making at the local level.

**Teacher Background Information**

At the time of this writing, the gold standard of parliamentary procedure is Robert’s Rules of Order (Robert’s Rules).

Robert’s Rules codifies parliamentary procedure essential to maintaining order, decorum, and to ensure consistency in parliamentary rulings.

The entirety of Robert’s Rules can be found here: [Robert's Rules of Order Online](http://www.rulesonline.com/index.html) and is updated often; however, here are some of the common features of meetings governed by Robert’s Rules:

1. Recognitions and speaking order: a presiding chairperson recognizes members who wish to speak and maintains speaking order, keeping in mind the rules governing orderly conduct.
2. Motions and Voting: Decisions are made by the process of making motions and voting. Language to do so is specific and prescribed and can be found on page 6 of the [“Robert’s Rules of Order: Cheat Sheet” by C. Alan Jennings, PRP](https://www.deltastate.edu/student-life/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2015/08/Roberts-Rules-of-Order-Cheat-Sheet.pdf).
3. Minutes: Minutes are notes of the meeting procedure and decisions made. Accurate records of meeting minutes should be kept as they can be referenced at future meetings.
4. Establishing quorum and majority rule: quorum is the minimum number of members of an assembly or society that must be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid. In general, decisions are made by majority vote with a chairperson ensuring the procedure is correctly followed.

The history and purpose of parliamentary procedures can go back to Thomas Jefferson’s [*A Manual of Parliamentary Practice for the Use of the Senate of the United States*](https://www.loc.gov/item/01024299/) (1801).

Three years earlier, in 1797, Jefferson had approached his single vice-presidential duty of presiding over the Senate with feelings of inadequacy. John Adams, who had held the job since the Senate’s founding in 1789, knew a great deal about Senate procedure and—of equal importance—about British parliamentary operations. Yet, despite Adams’ knowledge, senators routinely criticized him for his arbitrary and inconsistent parliamentary rulings.

In his first days as vice president, Jefferson decided to compile a manual of legislative procedure as a guide for himself and future presiding officers. He believed that such an authority, distilled largely from ancient books of parliamentary procedure used in the British House of Commons, would minimize senators’ criticism of presiding officers’ rulings, which in those days were not subject to reversal by the full Senate. (*Thomas Jefferson's Manual of Procedure,* 2022)

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**Mock Parliamentary Rules**

1. The Board Chair calls the meeting to order by stating, “Members and distinguished guests, the school board meeting is now called to order.”
2. A school board member should make a motion for 4-day school weeks so debate can begin. To do so, a member should request to be recognized by the chair and say something like: “I move the school board to amend the school year to 4-day weeks.” The motion should be seconded by another school board member after which the chair opens the floor for discussion.
3. Members and guests should be seated and attentive during the meeting. The chair has the discretion to remove members for speaking out of turn.
4. Prior to speaking, guests should state their name and what organization they represent.
5. Members and guests who wish to speak should raise their hand and wait for the chair to recognize them.
6. Each member should address the chair before speaking and avoid interrupting others.
7. Time Limit
	1. Each guest is allocated \_\_\_\_\_\_ minutes to speak.
	2. The chair may extend or shorten the time limit as they see fit.
	3. When the guest has finished, members each have \_\_\_\_\_ minutes to respond or ask clarifying questions to the guest.
8. Once all arguments for and against are heard, or until time deems it necessary to do so, the chair calls for a vote on the motion. Voting can be done by voice or show of hands. The motion passes with ⅔ of the school board members voting “yes”. If there is a tie, the chair has the deciding vote. Note: With Robert's Rules a tie means that the motion fails so if there is a tie on a school board with an even number of people the motion fails. If there is an odd number of people on the school board (e.g., Orange County) then if everyone votes there is a decision and a tie occurs only if a member is not present to vote or abstains.

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**Reflection: School Board Meeting Simulation**

1. How did the role you played influence your decision-making?
2. Did you consider the interests of other groups? Why or why not?
3. How did the social interest groups influence the school board members' decision-making process?
4. Were there any challenges in reaching a consensus or making a decision?
5. What can be learned from this simulation about the role of leadership and participation in decision-making?

**Sources**

[Florida Statutes Title XIX Chapter 286.011](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0200-0299/0286/Sections/0286.011.html)

[Florida Statutes Title XIX Chapter 286.0114](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0200-0299/0286/Sections/0286.0114.html)

Florida Sunshine Public Records Law

<https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/FloridaSunshinePublicRecordsLaws.pdf>

[Roberts Rules of Order](http://www.rulesonline.com/rror--00.htm)

<https://www.ulm.edu/staffsenate/documents/roberts-rules-of-order.pdf>

*Thomas Jefferson’s Manual of Procedure*. U.S. Senate: Thomas Jefferson’s Manual of Procedure. (2022, December 2). https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures/rules-procedures/jeffersons-manual.htm