

Suggestions for Using “Maxiopolis” in a Classroom

Maxiopolis is a simulation intended to give students hands-on experience of how government works, particularly local legislative bodies like city, suburban, or town councils. Teachers are encouraged to use the materials in any way they choose. The following suggestions allow for approximately five days of lessons. Students work in small groups to represent a district in a town, suburban, or city legislature, introducing, debating, and passing or rejecting bills of law. The Council Executive or Speaker, or Mayor can act as the presiding officer in managing the Maxiopolis legislative body according to Robert’s Rules of Order, or any other guide to parliamentary procedure that you prefer and that the students’ can grasp most easily.

To Begin

Students should be divided into groups of three or four corresponding to the eight to ten (8-10) council districts in the city, suburb, or town. Each group will receive a profile of the city, a profile of their council district, and the bills to be considered (up to 8-10 depending on council seats). Each set of players will be dealt a card indicating party affiliation. The card will also tell whether the council seat is up for reelection this year.

As a class, the students may review the suburb, town, or city’s profile. You, as their teacher and guide, can help them with any information they don’t understand. You may also want to discuss the two political parties and the differences between them. And you may increase the number and size of districts, council areas, etc., depending on the size of your class enrollment.

In groups

Students will be given a profile of their district, copies of the bills they will consider, and a work sheet for each bill. You can distribute 8-10 worksheets and bills to each student, or you can cut the number, as time allows.

A simple majority is needed to pass each bill. Students should discuss the bills within their district and decide how they will vote. They should also lobby other districts to get the required number of votes. Explain to them that they can get support from their own party or from other districts. Make sure that they know they can amend the bills at any time to get support from other council members.

Voting

Up to 10 players will be selected at random to present a bill to the full council. These players will explain (using the worksheet) why they will vote for or against the bill. If time allows, they can return to their district to reconsider bills after the presentation.

Each member gets one vote, but that vote must represent the consensus of the group working together as holding a council seat. Bills pass by a simple majority. Once bills are passed, players choose a “veto card” at random. If the card says the mayor vetoes the bill,

players can lobby other districts to gain enough votes for a 2/3rds majority. A second vote will be taken for all vetoed bills.

Assessment

If time allows: Have students consider the bills that were passed. Does the city have enough money to pay for them? Who will be helped by this bill? Who will be harmed? Which districts came out ahead? Which lost? What are your chances for reelection after these votes?

The more bills that are passed, the greater the sense of success, and the more successful the classroom will be judged as a representative body.

For a full package of materials to play Maxiopolis, please send a request and a check in the amount of \$20 to cover reproduction, postage, and handling to:

The Taft Institute for Government

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