



AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

institute for Public Administration

How to Conduct a Mock Caucus

Rationale

As early as grade 4 Delaware standards anticipate that students will begin learning about the “formal and informal” methods by which democratic groups function. Caucuses are important methods in many democratic venues and developing citizens should understand how they work for a variety of purposes (e.g., passing legislation, nominating candidates). Students in upper grades should be given opportunities to practice “participating in the civic process.”

Suggested Process for Mock Caucus

Pre-Caucus Planning

Plan to divide your class time into two segments—first part for a Democratic caucus and the second for the Republican caucus. The Democratic caucus may take a little more time. Prior to class, post the names of the Democratic candidates in different areas of the room, leaving larger areas for the candidates likely to draw many supporters.

Before the Mock Caucus

1. Explain the purpose of a caucus, i.e., to determine the number of supporters within a state that each candidate is allowed to send the national nominating conventions this summer. Each party will select its candidate for President at the 2016 summer conventions. Iowans will send 30 delegates to the Republican convention in Cleveland (1,237 votes needed to win the Republican nomination) and 52 to the Democrat’s convention in Philadelphia (2,383 votes needed to win the Democratic nomination).
 - a. States may choose to use the caucus or primary methods to select their convention delegates. Iowa holds the first caucus. New Hampshire holds the first primary.
2. Review the list of candidates from the two parties.
3. Have the students preview the candidate profiles available here or at www.ipa.udel.edu/democracy/resources/ (only those leading in the polls are included in the packet of Republicans profiled).

Note: *These profiles are generic and open to revision. You may want to have students to do their own research on candidates and/or discuss the candidates with their families and friends outside of class.*

Day of Mock Caucus

4. Suggested Procedures: Have students take their seats when they enter the room (classroom, cafeteria, etc.). Tell them that class will be divided into two caucuses: Democrat first followed by Republican.

Mock Democratic Caucus

5. Explain the slightly adapted process used by Democrats: students will be invited to go to that area of the room where the name of the candidate that they support is posted. Each candidate group will elect a spokesperson to offer remarks aimed at convincing those in other candidate groups to switch. Students are given opportunities to switch if they wish. The amount of time in class will dictate how much time you can offer for follow-up speeches and new opportunities to switch. Calculate the percentage of delegates who supports each candidate. The percentages will help determine who gets to go to the national nominating convention for each candidate. Note that the Democrats require a candidate to get at least 15% of the voters' support to be eligible to move on. So, candidates with few supporters in the room might be encouraged to switch to another candidate.

Mock Republican Caucus

6. Remove the names of Democratic candidates from your walls and replace them with the names of the Republican candidates who you will feature in the mock caucus. Tell students that it is now time to conduct the mock Republican caucus.
7. Explain the slightly adapted, simpler process used by Republicans: students enter the room. Supporters of the different candidates deliver messages of support for their candidates. Those in attendance cast ballots for one candidate. Count the votes. The number of delegates for each candidates sent to the national convention will be determined proportionally.

List of Leading Candidates*

Democrats	Republicans
Hillary Clinton	Jeb Bush
Martin O'Malley	Ted Cruz
Bernie Sanders	Ben Carson
	Marco Rubio
	Donald Trump

*listed alphabetically

Other Republicans who might be included:

- Chris Christie
- Carly Fiorina
- Mike Huckabee
- John Kasich
- Rand Paul
- Rick Santorum

Debrief

Invite students to discuss matters such as the advantages and disadvantages of caucuses. Do they recommend the method? Which party's method seems best?

For Further Reading

CBSNews offers a more detailed description of the caucus process at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-the-iowa-caucuses-work/>