

UNIT TITLE:

Teacher's Handbook: Parliament at Work CD-ROM

Writer/Management:

Joy Schultz, Sandra Kenman and QSOSE Consortium

Audience:

Lower and middle secondary

Purpose:

To provide an overview of the CD-ROM to support teachers when planning lessons and monitoring students' progress

Links to Curriculum:

QSOSE has developed a planning matrix as a separate document. This document includes a matrix which links the *Discovering Democracy* materials, the learning outcomes in the new SOSE syllabus, and examples of topics currently taught in schools. Copies have been sent to all Queensland schools.

Discovering Democracy links

Stories of Democracy CD-ROM

TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

PARLIAMENT AT WORK

SECONDARY

INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

There are six sections for secondary:

- Should the People Rule?
- Parties Control Parliament/Law
- Democratic Struggles
- What Sort of Nation
- Getting Things Done
- All Units of Work

SHOULD THE PEOPLE RULE

This section focuses on voting systems.

The presenter describes a number of systems beginning with first past the post. Students listen and then drag a tick beside their chosen candidate. Students then listen and look at a simulated example where a machine places votes into A, B, C, D or E containers. The presenter describes the disadvantages of first past the post by using an example of voting to paint a classroom using a particular colour. This leads to a description of the preferential system. Students fill out a preferential voting card by dragging the numbers 1 to 5 to the boxes. The presenter then describes how the votes are counted and allocated. The machine places the votes into the A, B, C, D or E containers and students see how those candidates with the lowest numbers of votes disappear.

The presenter describes how the preferential voting system is used for the House of Representatives and then describes how the proportional representation system is used for the Senate.

Students have an opportunity to run an election again using either

- First past the post
- Preferential
- Proportional Representation

PARTIES CONTROL PARLIAMENT/LAW

This section focuses on passing a Bill in the legislative process.

A cartoon Minister describes a particular law being developed. Students click on a chart to see the legislative process. There are 15 steps on the chart:

1. Community action
2. A Special Drought Assistance Bill is proposed
3. Agriculture Department gives advice on the proposal
4. Other Departments comment on the proposal
5. Cabinet considers the proposal
6. Bill is drafted
7. Government party approves the Bill
8. House of Representatives first reading
9. House of Representatives second reading
10. House of Representatives third reading
11. Senate first reading
12. Senate second reading
13. Senate Standing Committee
14. Senate committee of the Whole
15. Senate third reading
16. Return to the House of Representatives
17. Royal assent
18. Proclamation

Students can click on 'go back' or 'Question time' or 'Read the Bill'. Student use their notebook to write a report on question time. Students are reminded to 'Write a headline for evening news'. Students click on people (parliamentarians) in the cartoon to hear a question, and listen to the Minister give the answer. Questions and answers provide information on the need to balance environmental issues and agriculture/farming issues.

Students return to the chart to select another area eg 'read the Bill'. A section of the Bill is provided and possible Amendments. Students need to go to the menu section top left of the screen to leave this. There are no verbal instructions as to what to do next.

DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES

This section focuses on drawing electoral boundaries.

Students join the presenter in a simulation for creating electorates in Templestowe. Students read that there are 3 triggers that can cause redistribution:

- If seven years has elapsed since the last redistribution
- When the number of parliamentary representatives to which a state or territory is entitled has changed
- When the number of electors in more than one third of the divisions in a state deviates from the average divisional enrolment by more than 10% in three consecutive months.

Students view a map to understand the type of area – rural/developed, and hear that it is seven years since a redistribution. The presenter provides numbers of electors and the number of districts needed. 1100,000 – 11 electorates made up 81 districts. Students should use the ‘back’ button if they need to hear this information again.

The presenter provides information on the issues the Redistribution Committee must consider when making a decision:

- Population (current and projected)
- Physical features and area
- Community of interest, including economic, social and regional interest
- Boundaries of existing divisions.

The instructions provided to students to complete the redistribution exercise include:

- Select between the electorates by clicking on the buttons next to their names
- Then click on each district to add it to the electorate
- If you want to remove a district from an electorate just click on it again
- In Templestowe there must be at least 90 000 people in each electorate and no more than 110 000. The display will let you know when you have selected enough districts to satisfy this margin
- An electorate must be made up of districts with at least one common border
- Remember districts shouldn't cross major geographical boundaries.

This is a fairly difficult task for student if they do not have a printed copy of the above instructions. When errors are made, advice is provided.

WHAT SORT OF NATION

This section focuses on balancing the budget – ‘You be the Treasurer’.

Students are provided with a written description of ‘Balancing the Budget’. They are advised that Cabinet has discussed ways of reducing the nation’s debt and concerns are raised about the effect on industry and jobs. The students are told their job as Treasurer is to cut spending for all government departments. They are reminded that their decisions will have consequences and will be tough. The decisions in this scenario have been exaggerated so that differences in decisions can be more dramatic.

Geraldine describes last year’s budget and this year’s budget. The areas of the budget include:

Housing and community amenities

Sport recreation and culture

General public services

Economic services

Education

Social security and welfare

Health

Defence.

Instructions for students:

At the top of each budget expenditure there is an amount showing how much was spent in that area last year. Click and hold on this amount to get a pop up menu to select this year’s expenditure.

You must reduce the overall budget to 82 billion dollars

To see the consequences of reduced spending click on the coloured dots to the left of each area.

Note: Students may need a printed version of the above instructions as they do not remain on the screen for long.

As students click on an amount, they must choose a new amount. Depending on their choice, a list of consequences then appears. Students continue in this way until they balance the budget to the required amount. A scale on the left of the list shows how close students get to their target.

Note: It is important students do not click on the mouse, but rather hold down until choosing the desired amount.

Note: This activity requires students to have a fair understanding of large mathematical numbers. Some preliminary work on reading the following may be needed. Original numbers:

- Housing and community amenities \$1101m
- Sport, Recreation and Culture \$1326m
- General Public Services \$6766m
- Economic Services \$4552m
- Education \$10788m
- Social Security and Welfare \$50420m
- Health \$20734m
- Defence \$10414m

GETTING THINGS DONE

Opal Bay – Parliamentary Committee Hearing

Students listen to the cartoon Mayor who describes the Quarantine Station issue – people have expressed different views at a public meeting. Students are asked to move around town, talk to people and look in the information office and newsagent. A parliamentary committee is investigating four options for the use of the land. Students collect arguments for and against each option in the electronic notebook. They then write a report for the parliamentary committee.

Students move the arrow around the screen and when it turns into a pointing finger, check the information.

Examples of visuals and information sources:

- Jetty, town, quarantine station
- Sale Bill; television broadcast; more of the Mayor; citizens' group
- Newsagent; Fishing Journal; newspaper article;
- Federal Member; resident who has lived in the area and Secretary of State Park; Caretaker of Quarantine Station
- Environmental/business person; Real estate agent wanting land developed into a casino etc.
- Hairdressing salon/in favour to build houses on land; environmentalist
- Owner of Oz Opal surf shop/land to be used 1/3 for camping rest kept natural/tourists come to see beaches; electrician/came to town for beaches; person worried about koalas if houses built; teacher/develop land for more people, bigger school, more resources, more jobs, children before environment.

Note: To exit, the student usually has to find an arrow pointing out of a doorway or to the left.

As students move through screens and listen to different views, a map is created with all people 'clicked' appearing in the relevant areas eg Quarantine Station; Town; Beach; Jetty. Students re-click to hear the opinion again and then drag the person to one of four areas depending on the views expressed.

- Full Development
- 2/3 Development
- 1/3 Development
- State park

A report page is available with a heading and two sub-headings: Recommendation; Reasons for your recommendation.

ALL UNITS OF WORK

Students answer 12 questions and can repeat with other questions. See the primary section for the type of visuals and format for the questions. Students are provided with the correct answer if an incorrect answer is provided. A percentage score is recorded.

Examples of questions asked:

The Speaker

- a. Represents the Government
- b. Keeps the House of Representatives in order
- c. Is the Queen's representative in the House
- d. Decides which party wins a debate.

The Leader of the Opposition sits:

- a. Opposite the Prime Minister
- b. On the backbench
- c. With the Cabinet
- d. Behind the Speaker