



OUR TOWN: A ROLE PLAY

(45 minutes)

OBJECTIVE

Students play the parts of city officials, members of boards and commissions, and ordinary citizens. In their roles, they examine both imaginary scenarios and actual issues being addressed in the community.

MATERIALS

The *Roles and Scenarios* handout; *Role Biography* handout; conference badges

GET READY

- ✓ Duplicate the *Role Biography* handout for each student in the class.
- ✓ Assign each student a different role from the list provided. Obtain conference badges and use markers or a word processor to label the badges with the roles from the list. (The list can be found on the *Roles and Scenarios* handout.)
- ✓ Complete the scenarios list on the *Roles and Scenarios* handout with at least two possible scenarios (preferably ones that are currently being addressed in the community).
- ✓ Move desks so that groups of four can consult during the role play.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Distribute badges and the *Role Biography* handout and give students five minutes to fill out Parts I and II of the handout.
- ✓ Choose a scenario from the list.
- ✓ Ask students, in their roles, to record their reactions to the scenario in Part III of the *Role Biography*. Give them five minutes to do so.
- ✓ Say, *At your tables, please express your community concerns and opinions with the other three "townspeople." After a few minutes, we will hold the Town Meeting to discuss the issue and we will hear from all of you.*

- ✓ After the table consultations, ask the City Clerk (a student you have given the role to because of leadership abilities) to run the Town Meeting, which can last as long as you choose.
- ✓ Once the Town Meeting is over, choose another scenario, preferably a "real life" one from the community, and have the students respond to it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *As a student, did you personally disagree with what you had to present as, for instance, the town police chief?*
- ★ *As you can see, officials and citizens have to arrive at compromises. Is there an issue you can think of that seems to call for compromise? Can you suggest compromise solutions for that issue?*
- ★ *Would you like to have any of these roles in your community for real?*

MORE!

You may continue the role play for several days, adding a research component: consulting the media and/or the real people in town who hold the simulated positions to see what they think about the issues.



ROLES AND SCENARIOS

Roles:

Mayor
Building Inspector
Business License/Sales Tax Manager
City Attorney
City Clerk
City Council Member
City Manager
Community Center Director
Director of Libraries
Facilities Maintenance Director
Finance Officer
Fire Commissioner
Garbage Department Director
Insurance Officer
Parks and Recreation Director Personnel
Director Police Chief
Public Information Officer
Purchasing Officer
Superintendent of Schools
Transportation Director
Member, Design
Board Member, Arts Commission
Member, Human Relations Commission
Member, Planning and Zoning Board
Downtown Department Store Owner
Elderly Retiree
Wheelchair-bound Citizen
Parent of Four Children

Scenarios:



ROLE BIOGRAPHY

Name of student: _____

Role: _____

PART I: GET A LIFE!

Invent for yourself some background, family, personality traits, etc. (Example: “I am a 30-year-old man with a young family and I’ve been the Parks and Recreation Director for only two months. I’m likely to back down in a clash with older, more established community leaders.”)

PART II: MY JOB IS TO...

List the most important concerns you have in your role in the city’s welfare: (Example: “As the Fire Commissioner, I am most worried about fire safety for all the citizens, through enforcement of the fire code.”)

PART III: HERE’S MY REACTION

For each scenario in the role play, give your response to possible benefits and problems in your area of concern. (Example: If the city holds a crafts fair, the Garbage Department Director wants exhibitors to clean up after themselves; wants no disruptions of the refuse removal schedule; wants a budget for additional trash cans on the streets, etc.)

SCENARIO 1:

My reaction:

SCENARIO 2:

My reaction:
