



YOU DECIDE!

Purpose:

Students will be involved in weighing various viewpoints or perspectives toward an historical or contemporary issue and will develop verbal communication skills to express the major arguments reflecting such viewpoints. Students will also be required to come to a conclusion or decision regarding the most appropriate course of action to be taken toward the issue and will verbally defend their decisions in an organized process, permitting equal opportunity for all students to be involved in the decision-making process.

Procedure:

1. The instructor will read together with the class the basic facts of the situation, included on the handout.
2. Students will be permitted to briefly ask the instructor any questions to clarify the facts or details of the situation they are curious about knowing prior to deliberating on a decision or solution.
3. Students will be divided into three groups, numbered one, two and three. The first group will be spokespersons for one viewpoint or perspective of the issue to be debated. Group two will represent the opposing viewpoint. Group three members will represent a neutral viewpoint who will make their ultimate decisions based on the arguments made by the members of groups one and two. As the instructor numbers off students, 1,2 and 3, ask each set of "ones" and "twos" to note who their number "three" student is. They will later return to this number "three" student to conduct formal debates regarding the issue at hand.
4. Send all of the members of the first two groups to two separate corners of the classroom (or perhaps out into different portions of the hallway.) The third can remain in the center of the classroom, but out of the hearing range of either group.
5. Give each of the first two groups 10 minutes to discuss what their key arguments will be in their defense of their assigned viewpoints. Members should jot down any ideas they wish to recall. During the same time, group three should discuss questions they wish to ask either side of the debate. They might also take a polling of how they would decide the issue prior to hearing the arguments made by either group.
6. Ask group three members to spread out throughout the classroom, placing two desks in front of theirs and await for the arrival of the representatives from groups one and two.
7. Each student from group one and two will return to his/her number "three" student. These groups of three students (two students representing opposite viewpoints and one a neutral decision-maker) will be speaking only to each other for the next few minutes. When the instructor calls "Begin" the student from group one will begin addressing student number three, outlining all the arguments to be made in support of his/her assigned viewpoint. During this discussion, number three may interrupt, asking questions, but student number two must remain completely silent.
8. After three minutes has passed, the instructor will call "Time" and number one must stop talking.
9. Repeat the same procedure in step # 7 for student number two to speak.
10. Students number three will then be asked to formulate a decision based on only the information and arguments made by students number one and two. They can be asked to come before the class and verbally announce their decision and reasons behind it.
11. The instructor might wish to ask students number three to also announce how they were leaning prior to hearing the oral arguments and discuss what major points altered their decision, if any.

Options:

1. For debating past or current Supreme Court decisions, students number one simulate the attorneys representing the petitioner and those numbered two are attorneys representing the respondent. Those numbered three simulate members of the Court.
2. In other situations involving decisions requiring public policy, the neutral number threes can represent various decision-making groups, such as city council members, school board members, Presidential cabinet members, etc.