

Caucus 101: Mock Caucus Simulation

Length of class: 60-90 minutes

Objective: Students will be able to describe how the caucus process works to choose the presidential nominee for both the Republican and Democratic Party.

Additional objectives:

- Students will be able to identify the steps in the caucus process
- Students will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the caucus process

Iowa Core Standards:

SS.9–12.PSCL.1 - Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and demonstrate the value of lifelong civic action.*

SS.9–12.PSCL.5 - Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand strategies for effective political action that impact local, state, and national governance.*

Assessment: NONE

Materials Needed: White board and “*Who Do You Support*” worksheet

Lesson Plans:

Mock Caucus Simulation Procedures

This simulation is the culmination of the “Caucus 101” curriculum. Every activity up to this point has been preparing students for this experience. Thus, there are not A, B, and C options for this simulation. We highly recommend that all students and classes follow the directions in these procedures as they are written. If modifications for time need to be made please simply shorten the length of time and do not skip any of the steps below because the following simulation will help to prepare students for the real caucus once they reach voting age. Below you will find the procedures for both the Democrat and Republican caucuses.

Warm-up (10 minutes)

1. On a slip of paper have students write down their favorite fruit from the following choices; Apples, Bananas, Grapes, or Oranges (you can add more choices if you would like, or limit them to speed up the process).
2. Have students pass in their slip of paper and tally the results on the board to determine the percentage of students that chose each fruit.
3. Declare the winner of the Republican Fruit Caucus to be the fruit which received the highest percentage of votes.
4. Designate a corner of the room for each fruit. Then, instruct students to move to the corner of the room which contains their fruit preference.
5. Once all students have moved to their preferred fruit’s corner, count the number of students in each group. Display the results on the board (they should be the same as the results from the Republican Fruit Caucus). Determine the percentage of the class that chose each fruit.
6. Declare that all fruits that do not contain at least 15% of the class population are considered inviable candidates. Then, instruct students with these fruit preferences that they need to either choose a new fruit, combine with another non-viable fruit to create a quorum, or abstain from voting by sitting in their seats. Instruct the viable fruit groups that they should use the next 2 minutes to persuade individuals from the non-viable fruits to join their group.
7. Once all of the students from the non-viable fruit groups have chosen a new fruit, or chosen to abstain, count the number of students in each group to determine the percentage of students that chose that fruit. Display these numbers on the board.
8. Assuming that your class will receive 4 delegates to the “Democrat school-wide favorite fruit caucus”, divide up the 4 delegate seats proportionally among the classes’ favorite fruits. For instance, if Apples received 25% of

the votes they should receive 1 delegate. Have students choose a representative to be the delegate which will represent the class at the “Democrat School Wide Favorite Fruit Caucus”

9. Lastly, explain to students that the caucus that they are about to participate in will operate very similarly to the activity they just did, but instead of choosing their favorite fruit they will be selecting their favorite presidential candidates from both the Republican and Democratic Parties.

Simulation: Republican Caucus (15 minutes)

10. Have students use their “Who Do You Support” worksheet given to them for homework from last class to determine which Republican candidate they support the most.
11. Instruct students to write down the name of the Republican candidate that they support the most onto a small sheet of paper and hand it to the front of the room.
12. Tabulate the number of votes for each candidate and write them down on the board
13. Have students determine the percentage that each candidate received and write it down on the board
14. Take a minute to remind students that the process does not end at this precinct level. Remind them that from here delegates from the precinct are chosen to represent their precinct at the county level. Once the county has held its caucus, delegates are chosen to represent the county at the district level. This process repeats itself at the district level where each district is granted 3 representatives to represent the district at the Iowa Republican Convention. Lastly, 23 delegates are chosen by the Republican Party to attend the National Convention. Therefore Iowa receives 41 total delegates. 18 delegates are chosen by the districts (3 from each district) and 23 are chosen by the Iowa Republican Party. These delegates will attend the Republican National Convention, where the Republican presidential nominee is chosen, and will usually vote in accordance with the wishes of the state, however there is no law forcing them to vote in this way.
15. Assume that the state of Iowa percentages are identical to the percentages for your class and proportionally divide the 41 delegate seats between the candidates. For instance, if candidate A received 33% of the votes then they should be granted 14 delegates whereas if candidate B received 50% of the votes then they should be granted 21 delegates.
16. Please upload your results to the Iowa Secretary of State’s website so we can add it to our state-wide Caucus data: <http://sos.iowa.gov/youth/studentmockelection/index.html>
NOTE: This will require that you register on the Secretary of State’s website: <http://sos.iowa.gov/youth/studentmockelection/index.html> . You are then given a password to upload your class (or school) results.

Simulation Democrat Caucus (30 minutes)

17. Have students use their “Who Do You Support” worksheet given to them for homework from last class to determine which Democratic candidate they support the most.
18. Designate a corner of the room for each Democratic candidate. Then, instruct students to move to the corner of the room which contains their candidate preference. If a student is undecided please have those students move to the center of the room.
19. Within their chosen candidate groups have students develop a 2 minute persuasive speech to influence the undecided voters to choose their preferred candidate. The group should also choose a spokesperson to deliver the two minute address to the class.
20. Give each candidate group a maximum of 2 minutes to deliver their speech to persuade the undecided voters. If during this time the undecided voters, or voters from other candidate groups, would like to change groups please allow them to move freely to another candidate’s corner.
21. After all groups have addressed the class, and all students have chosen a candidate please count the number of supporters for each candidate and post these numbers on the board.
22. Then, have students determine the percentage of the class that each candidate has received.
23. Once percentages have been determined for each candidate identify any candidates who have less than the 15% needed to be considered a viable candidate. Declare these candidates not viable and instruct students in these

candidate groups to move to the center of the room.

24. Students who voted for a non-viable candidate now have 3 options. They can choose a viable candidate to support, they can combine with another non-viable candidate group to create a quorum, or they can abstain from voting by sitting in their seats.
25. Each viable candidate group will now develop a 2 minute address in order to persuade the students from the non-viable candidate groups to join their group. Make sure to remind students to include arguments within their class address that will persuade these voters to join their side. Hint: have students use their “who do you support” worksheet to point out similarities between their candidate and the non-viable candidate that the students chose before. Or point out differences between the other viable candidates and the student’s non-viable candidate choice.
26. After every group has addressed the class have the students once again move to the corner of the room of their preferred candidate.
27. Count the number of students who support each candidate and record the information on the board.
28. Have students determine the percentage of the class that supports each candidate.
29. Assume that your precinct is heavily populated and has been awarded 4 delegates. Divide these delegates proportionally amongst the candidates. For instance, if Candidate A has received 25% of the vote then that candidate will receive 1 delegate, while if Candidate B has received 50% of the vote then that candidate will receive 2 delegates.
30. This concludes the voting portion of the democratic caucus.
31. Remind students that these 4 delegates will move on to represent the precinct at the county convention, at which point the caucus process will happen again. From there, the county will select delegates. These county delegates will represent their county at the district conventions. The caucus process is executed once again at these district conventions and delegates are chosen to attend the Iowa Democratic Convention. Through the same caucus process the state of Iowa Democratic Party chooses 56 delegates to attend the National Democratic Convention. Just like the Republican National Convention, these delegates have pledged to support the candidate that the state has chosen, however, there is no law requiring them to do so. At the national convention the Democratic Party chooses its presidential nominee. After both the Republican and Democrat national conventions have selected their Presidential nominees the race for the general election begins.

Upload Results

32. Please upload your results to the Iowa Secretary of State’s website so we can add it to our state-wide Caucus data: <http://sos.iowa.gov/youth/studentmockelection/index.html>
NOTE: This will require that you register on the Secretary of State’s website: <http://sos.iowa.gov/youth/studentmockelection/index.html> . You are then given a password to upload your class (or school) results.
-