

Political Principles of the United States Govt.

Middle/ Junior High School

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- use and create charts, graphs, diagrams, and pictures to determine characteristics of people, places, or events;
- develop fluency in content vocabulary, and comprehension of verbal, written, and visual sources.

2015 Standards

- Virginia SOL: CE.2a** The student will apply social science skills to understand the foundations of American constitutional government by explaining the fundamental principles of consent of the governed, limited government, rule of law, democracy, and representative government
- CE.3c** The student will apply social science skills to understand citizenship and the rights, duties, and responsibilities of citizens by describing the duties of citizenship, including obeying the laws

National: NSS-C.5-8.3, C.9-12.1 Principles of Democracy

Approx. Time: One 90 minute block or two 45 minute blocks.

Hook: Start the class by telling the students that our classroom will be a town for the next few minutes. We are going to experience democracy in our town in two different ways. First, our town will make decisions using a direct democracy style of government. Second, we will experience making decisions using a representative democracy style of government.

1. **Direct Democracy-** Ask the class if they know what majority rule means. Explain that in majority rule, everyone gets one vote and the side with the majority (over half) of the votes gets to make the decision. In this first activity, the town will (i) decide its name and, (ii) enact two laws. To name the town, any town citizen can propose a new name. After several students have volunteered name suggestions and the teacher has written the names on the board, have the class vote on the town name. If no name receives a majority of the votes, eliminate the names that received the least number of votes and vote again until a majority is achieved. Once the town has chosen a name, have the class create two laws in the same fashion, making sure any law passed receives a majority of YES votes. Discuss the Virginia SOL definition of **democracy: In a democratic system of government, the people rule.**
2. **Representative Democracy-** Explain that we will now switch to a different type of democracy. Divide the class into four sections, placing them into four corners. Each section is a "district" of the town. Simultaneously, students may volunteer to run for the position of representative of their district. To run for office, a student must simply stand up and tell the other members of their district why he or she is the best candidate to represent the district and make laws for the town. Once each student candidate has made a brief speech, students in the district vote by secret ballot. Once each district has chosen a representative, the four elected officials will have 5-10 minutes in the hall or corner of the room to create two laws for the town. Then, the four representatives will present their new laws to the class. Discuss the Virginia SOL definition of



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representative government: *In a representative system of government, people elect public officials to make laws and conduct government on their behalf.*

Direct Instruction: As you present the attached slideshow, have students take notes on the student handout provided below of the five political principles. If you have “flipped” your classroom, or would like to, you can assign the slideshow for homework and have students take the notes at home to save time, then review it in class. Begin with democracy and representative democracy since they were the topics of the introduction activity. Then discuss each of the five principles.

[Five Political Principles Slideshow](#)

Assessment: Once students have taken the notes and discussed them, they will complete the “Apply Your Knowledge” section on the student handout below.

Students will choose one of the five political principles and create a cartoon strip or a single cartoon to explain the principle and give an example of it. Students may use one of the attached handouts (six cells or one large cell). The student may not write the name of the principle on the front of their paper nor should he or she have the name of the principle written anywhere in the cartoon. Once students are finished, they will pair up with several other students to have them read the cartoon and try to guess which political principle was the topic of the cartoon. After several minutes, students may volunteer to show the entire class their cartoons to have the other students guess the principles represented on each..

Advanced Learners: Have students pick two of the principles of government and find a current news article that represents each of the two principles. Students should write a summary of the article and explain why it represents a particular principle.