

MOCK CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

Objectives

- Students will identify a potential change to enact in their classroom.
- Students will create an original draft of a congressional resolution.
- Students will experience the basic procedure of the 1776 2nd Continental Congress.

Materials needed

- Resolution Worksheet
- Writing implements
- Congress Proceeding Script
- Podium or Music Stands & Gavel (optional)

Activity

Many scenes of the musical *1776* take place in the halls of the 2nd Continental Congress in Philadelphia, and feature the founders of America arguing, debating, and voting over whether the 13 American colonies should pursue independency. Today, we are going to step into their shoes to get a sense of just how this congress worked, and what had to happen in order to form the American union we know today.

- Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students.
- Announce that student groups are congressional committees, and they should come up with a name for the colony (area of the classroom) that they represent.
- The goal for each group of representatives is to help create a more perfect union in the classroom. Brainstorm with students about their civic concerns. Are there procedures they'd like to change about the class, or something they'd like to add to the syllabus or policies?
- Small groups should then discuss and identify one issue for which they'd like to draft a resolution to change or amend.
- Educator should pass out Resolution Worksheet, review with students, and give them 10 minutes to draft their resolution.
- Once drafting is complete, students should elect a representative to present and defend their proposal.
- Educator will then open the floor to deliberation, following the provided "Congress Script."

Reflection Questions

- Today, we voted by majority rule, which means that whoever got more votes would win. But what if we had had to be unanimous? What would you have had to do to make that happen?
- In 1776, the congress voted that every single colony would have to vote "yea" in order to achieve independence. Hancock says "either we walk together, or together we must stay where we are." Why do you think he made that decision?

While you watch the play, see if you recognize any of the vocabulary and procedure that we experienced today. And pay attention to the compromises that were made in order to achieve a unanimous vote for independence. Was it worth it?

Lesson Extensions

If there is an issue that splits the students, educator could make a “1776” rule that the votes must be unanimous for the proposal to pass. Students would have to convince one another to vote for their side – much like the 2nd Continental Congressional members must in the play.

Lesson Variations

Proposals don’t need to be about changes the students would make to the classroom. Students could draft proposals that address concerns they have about the general school environment, their own communities, or their countries.

RESOLUTION WORKSHEET

Name

What is the name of the resolution? *Ex. The Open Snack Act*

Purpose

What is your resolution and why is it important? *Ex. This resolution would enable students to snack at their desks as they desire. It is important because this is the first class of the day, and students who overslept may not have had the chance to eat breakfast and can't learn well because they have low blood sugar.*

Provisions

How will you enact this resolution? What are the concerns you see coming up around this resolution, and how will you address them?

In your provisions, really think about what it would take to make your dream a reality. Remember that any funding or supervision will need to come from the class.
Ex. This resolution will go into effect immediately. A student officer will be elected to ensure that the desks are kept clean and trash is thrown away. If a student is found to have left their trash behind or their desk unclean, they will lose their snack privileges for the rest of the semester. A tax of \$5 per student will purchase Wet Wipes for the classroom to use for the year.

CONGRESS SCRIPT

Now that the colonial representatives have been selected, we're ready to start our day of deliberation. I will be playing the role of President of Congress, Mr. John Hancock.

I now call the congress to order. The continental congress of _____ is now in session.

First order is a resolution from the colony of _____. _____, please present your proposal.

(They do so.)

Thank you. Now after a resolution has been proposed, we will need someone to second that proposal to continue. Can someone from the colony please stand up and say, 'I second the proposal?'

(Someone does so)

The resolution has been proposed and seconded. I now open the floor to questions. Does anyone have any questions about this proposal?

(Colony fields questions)

The chair will now open floor to debate. Is there anyone who feels that we should not adopt this proposal? You have one minute to state why.

Colony _____, would you like to rebut, or defend against, that statement?

Thank you. The chair would like to call to question this proposal (which means to move to vote). Will anyone second?

(Someone seconds)

Thank you. All those in favor of adopting this proposal, please raise your hands and say "yea". All those against, please raise your hands and say "nay".

It looks like the congress has passed the resolution. Congratulations! **OR**
It looks like the congress has denied the resolution.

(REPEAT SCRIPT FOR EACH PROPOSAL)

I would like to move to adjourn for the day (that means end our session). Does anyone second that motion?

(Someone seconds)

Moved and seconded, the congress stands adjourned! Thank you!