

**State of the Art & Annenberg/CPB  
MAKING CIVICS REAL: A Workshop for Teachers**

**SHOW 4: Constitutional Convention**

**FINAL SCRIPT – 5/9/03– p. 1 of 26**

:16     Annenberg/CPB Funding Logo (include :15 fades)

:06     SOTA Logo (includes :15 fades)

Open Sequence

Velazquez:     If we're going to talk about citizenship, democratic participation, then we have to tailor our lessons to model that kind of behavior.

**Title:**            **Making Civics Real: A Workshop for Teachers**

*Student:*        *May I please introduce the president of the United States...*

**Narrator:**     **Engaged, reflective, concerned and collaborative – these are qualities we hope for in our citizens and in our classrooms. Constructivism is a theory of teaching and learning that helps teachers instill these qualities while also imparting real skills and knowledge.**

Borges:            A constructivist teacher is someone who builds on students' previous knowledge and previous experience.

*Johnson:*       *Petitioner will go first ...*

**Narrator:**     **Constructivism incorporates a number of teaching strategies you are probably already familiar with like: simulations, debate, small group work, and socratic questioning.**

Chandler          You prepare a lesson that will allow students to bring reality to what they are learning.

Johnson:        Each child brings something different and has looked at the material in a different way.

Martin:           But they also build on what other students are saying.

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*Student: And here we have the lack of family which I think is the most important...*

*Velazquez: The most challenging thing is being comfortable with letting students find their own way*

*Borges: If you make this decision, how will it affect high school students all around the country?*

**Narrator: This workshop profiles teachers who are effectively using constructivist strategies to address standards and cover diverse content areas. Cooperative learning appears throughout, but you will also see strategies like role playing, consensus building and service learning. The goal of this workshop is to give teachers new resources and ideas to reinvigorate civic education.**

**Show title: Constitutional Convention**

EXT of school, students entering

**Narrator: Banneker High School in Washington, DC is only a stone's throw away from the Capitol, The White House and the Supreme Court. But the three branches of government are being created anew by Matt Johnson's AP Comparative Government class. By drawing on their knowledge of present day governments around the world, students are conceptualizing a new government for a fictitious country they call Permistan. During the lesson, they will develop guidelines for each branch of government and conclude by holding a simulation of the constitutional convention.**

*Johnson: Okay, good morning class.*

*Students: Good morning, Mr. Johnson ...*

*Johnson: As we talked, we are going to start getting ready for the final exam and the AP final exam, and one of the things that we're going to do is the review activity, it's a mock constitutional convention, where you guys are going to be creating the document that will run or rule over the country that you represent, okay? And so, what I'm going to hand out first is the rubric, explaining my expectations for this activity.*

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**L3: Matt Johnson 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Comparative Government**

Johnson: This is an advanced placement Comparative government class. And since the beginning of the course we have studied five different countries, and the political systems and the political process. So the kids have got a wide range of constitutions to look at, procedures to examine. And my hope is that they're going to draw from all five, and the United States, and begin the process of putting together a constitution for a fictitious country, and in doing so, analyze what works, what doesn't work and really craft the ideal government.

Johnson: *We're going to look at the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the Legislative Branch, okay, and in a minute, I'm going to put you in groups, you're going to begin working on the Executive Branch. You have an Executive Branch worksheet in front of you. The categories are specific election rules, suffrage requirements, and then in every single worksheet we do, I'm asking you to identify where you've taken this specific example, what country, and then I also want you to tell me why. What is it that you like about that country's suffrage requirements or election process. Okay, when you get into your groups, you work together in filling this out. You do not have to have consensus with your other group mates. There may be some things that you feel strongly about that the rest of your group isn't supporting. When we come back together, that's when you can air your differences. Did you have a question, Chris?*

Chris: *Mr. Johnson, are we strictly to the countries we've studied, or could we just come up with this idea on our own, or how are we going to do this?*

Johnson: *You can come up with some ideas on your own. Try and ground as much as you can from these countries we studied, but that's not to say that there are ... all the answers lie in those six constitutions. Okay, good question. Okay, group one*

Johnson: My work has been really put in prior to the beginning of this lesson, in thinking about what I want to have the kids cover, and putting together the worksheets and the rubric and the groups. So, it's not teacher centered. It's really students learning from each other. And I think most of the time that's one of the best ways to get kids to learn.

Johnson: *You need to take out all your perms and all your information from this course ...*

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### L3: Matt Johnson 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Comparative Government

Johnson: When I first graduated from college, I came to Washington, DC, worked for a couple of political think tanks. Then I worked as a legislative librarian for a law firm, and enjoyed learning about the practice on Capitol Hill. And then I said, I've got to do something where I'm my own boss. So I took courses at night, and then student taught at a junior high here in DC. I began teaching with the idea that the teacher should be the center of the learning process. I mean, that's the traditional way that's the way I had been taught. And when I student taught, the teacher that I worked with was pretty good about doing cooperative learning. But still, once I got to my own class, you fall back on what you assume is the best way and gives you the most control. And after about a year I realized it's not the best way. And so I just started to go back to some of the things that I had been exposed to, and that was getting kids into groups, doing projects in class.

Johnson: *If you have questions raise your hand, and I'll circulate around.*

Johnson: I'm going to have to move around to all the groups and be fairly quick about my movements. Because if you stay with one group too long, the other folks, if they're not clear, are going to sit there and may lose some time. That's usually the hardest part. It's that initial introduction, where I stop talking and it's now on them.

### Activity One Constitution Creation: Executive Branch

Alvin: *I'm going to go against the US, because the President has to be 35. You know, and as generations go along, people are ... there are more younger people. Thirty five is not old, but I'm thinking maybe if you drop it to 30?*

Victor: *Don't you think like the more experience the President has the better he'll serve his country?*

Lauren: *See these days people, like younger people, are gaining more experience.*

### L3: Lauren

Lauren: This class has made it a lot more interesting and a lot more fun, because I actually find myself picking up the newspaper. I look at France, I look at Great Britain in class and. I still, after we finish studying it, I still want to continue to learn.

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*Toussaint: You know, you seen elections now. Some people say Bob Dole is too old. So you know, I mean, who is to say that's ageism? Who is to say who's too old and too young? I would make it ... I wouldn't want someone 18 running the country, but I think to be a full Democracy that's what you're going through, you know, voice of the people, 18 has got to be ... I mean, if you can vote at 18, you should be able to run for whatever office you want to at 18.*

*Alvin: You don't like that, do you?*

*Victor: I don't agree with that. I think that anyone that's going to take control of our government, that's going to be a chief of state, he should have some sort of experience ...*

*Alvin: He or she.*

*Victor: ... he or she should have some sort of political experience. He should have held some form of office.*

*Toussaint: I get you, but then why let an 18 year-old vote? If you can't ... if you're not competent enough to know the actual issue, then why should you be allowed to choose who's ...*

*Lauren: What's the difference between ... there's a difference between knowing the issues and understanding the depths of the issues.*

*Alvin: Maybe a dual presidency, like have a younger people's President and a senior citizen's President? Just a thought. That's too much?*

*Victor: But if you're going to separate it like that, why stop at some age, if you're going to separate it like that. Then you're going to need a President for the black people, a President for the Hispanic people, President for everyone, you'll have a lot of Presidents in this country, so ...*

*Johnson: One of the things I was looking for was that they were answering the questions that I hoped they would focus on. So if they were going off on a tangent, I would try and bring them back to perhaps the broader question, answering questions that kids have, obviously is what the first thing you want to do. So you're kind of steering them, if you have to, steering them back if they're maybe exploring an issue that really doesn't need to be discussed in such detail.*

*Johnson: And remember, don't worry about this one. That's very brief. And these are the duties of the Executive, things that he or she shares with the other branches, or that you want to make exclusive to the Executive, okay?*

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*Elliott: I would say that you don't have to be completely literate to be able to decide two names.*

*Christine: Why not?*

*Elliott: I mean, you're taking out a large chunk of the population by giving a literacy test.*

*Ceretta: If someone [unint.] can't even read, do you think they would know, be up on the issues and who would be the proper candidate if they can't even read? [unint.] they have that responsibility ...*

*Christine l: That's right.*

*Elliott: They should ... I mean, just cuz you can't ... there's a lot of people, a large segment of the population, who can't read or write.*

*Yahani: We're trying to establish a perfect country, and we're going to cover education at some point.*

*Elliott: So you deal with your population of people that can't read or write by not letting them vote.*

*Ceretta: That would be encouraging them to vote, to learn how to read, wouldn't it?*

*Elliott: What?*

*Ceretta: That would be an encouragement to learn how to read, wouldn't it?*

*Elliott: That's absurd.*

*Yahani: No, but if you can't vote, and voting is quite important in your country then, you're going to learn how to read.*

*Elliott: That's absurd. I mean, you don't deal with a problem by creating an obstacle.*

*Yahani: I'm not saying we're using that to deal with the problem. I'm saying that we're using that as a test for voting, because ...*

**L3: Elliott**

*Elliott: When you have to study something yourself and then need to explain it to everybody else. It forces you not only to go out and do the research, but to do the research in a way that you can explain it, in common language, to your classmates, which is harder than writing a paper. You do research and learn, so you become a more dynamic learner, instead of just learning things for the classes.*

*Yahani: If you can't read that you have a strong view for one person or the other person, you're probably being influenced by someone else's unbiased opinion, rather than something you actually figured out yourself.*

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*Elliott: But if you can read, and you're reading the newspaper, you're still being influenced by somebody's biased opinion. The newspaper is just as biased as television and the radio.*

*Yahani: But you have a chance to experience more by ... you can actually ... you can read facts. People could tell you ...*

*Elliott: Everything is inherently biased because it's coming from somebody else. You can't ... you can't ... if you can watch television an television and you can develop views, you shouldn't be able ... you shouldn't be excluded from voting, because you don't know how to read. I know people that can't read. I mean, I wouldn't call them stupid at all. I think people can be intelligent and not know how to read. So I wouldn't want them excluded, and that's going to be a large segment of your minority population, underrepresented because they can't read. I mean, you can select somebody, you can vote for somebody without knowing how to read. A literacy test tests if you know how to read, not if you know how to pick names. I mean, if anything, you want to make it easier for people who can't read, put pictures on the ballots, or then saying, you just can't vote at all. I mean, that's Fascist.*

*Yahani: So um, we are going to have pictures on the ballots?*

*Elliott: I mean, if you want to, yeah, we can get pictures.*

*Johnson: When you're grouping students you should be conscious of mixing abilities and mixing personalities. The problem is, in September, when you first begin this process, you may not have a real firm grasp of who's what, and what kind of kids will work well together. So you do a random grouping, and you keep an eye on it, and you make notes to yourself, who is working well together, who might be better suited in another group.*

*Johnson: And there's going to be pictures of the parties, or pictures of the candidates?*

*Elliott: I guess in the party representative, like the party symbol.*

*Johnson: Right, and then it's kind of taken from Indian politics, where there's a high illiteracy rate, so they have symbols for every party.*

*Girl: You want all political parties to be able to vote in the primaries, and this was taken from Russia, and our explanation was it's not fair that independent parties can't vote in the primaries.*

*Jade: Okay [unint.] primaries.*

*Girl: Our third election was the public office and private gains which came from India, and citizens ...*

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### L3: Jade

Jade: During an interactive project, such as the simulation that we're doing in class, is actually the best way to learn, because you learn through experience. With all of the countries that we study in this class, Mr. Johnson goes around the room, and he gives us a specific topic to write a one page report on, and we'll make copies for everyone in the class, and pass that out.

So it's like, we make our own textbook kind of like, because we do the research on our own. And we'll all come back and make presentations to the class. And we're just trying to learn how to devise a plan for another country. The best way to learn how to do that is to actually do it yourself, like not read about it.

Chris: *Do we want two Executives or do we want one Executive?*

Johnson: *Okay, [unint.] because if you guys can't agree, again, when we go to the full convention, you may find some allies that are out there that will support you. So you never know, okay? So don't get rid of it just because the four of you can't agree.*

Jean-Claude: *Oh no, I'm not.*

Johnson: *I didn't think you would. Okay, so now you're down to the cabinet.*

MS: *I think the Vice President should take the position, because that's one of the reasons why you voted for the President, because, you know, his ... I guess his partner equally play the role whether you vote for him or not, or she or not.*

Brionna: *If there were a separate election for Vice Presidents, then that would be okay. But you didn't really elect a Vice President. I think it should be ...*

MS: *Well, if you don't agree with the choice of the Vice President, then don't vote for the President. That's [unint.] ...*

August: *[unint.] keep the Vice President, because we elected the President based on the positions and ideals that he took, so the ... his successor should be the same person, with the same kind of ideas.*

Brionna: *I don't agree. We can just write down different things.*

MS: *So okay, we'll agree to disagree on this one.*

FS: *If, him and the Legislature are in a stalemate and can't get anything done, then he should be able to dissolve the Legislature and start over.*

Chris: *With the approval of the people, though.*

Johnson: *With the approval? How does he do that?*

Chris: *With election.*



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*Jean Claude: See, that's stupid, though, because the people elected the Legislatures though, so they should get their time to shine. To just dissolve it when you want, that has always bothered me. I didn't like that from [unint.].*

*FS: Not necessarily when you want but when it's necessary. If you're not making any progress between yourself and your Legislature, you might as well start over with a new Legislature that's done by direct election of the people.*

*Jean Claude: See, Jacques Chirac tried that, and did it work? No, he still ended up with a Legislature ... well the same party Legislature, and he's getting nowhere, so ...*

*Johnsont: Well you do, and you always run that risk of it backfiring politically, but you don't even like the idea to just wait for another election to come around and maybe you'll get your majority. Okay, well we will have, I'm sure, some debate on that, whether to use the French system or stick with the US or more traditional.*

**L3 Chris**

*Chris: I like learning cooperatively, because I can learn more, and I'm not confined to a book. I can go on the Net and then search for answers. I can go to the library. I can read periodicals, and I can do things of all nature, so I can get a full scope of what we're studying, and in the classroom and not just confined to a textbook, where I'm just limited to the author of the book's subjective point of view.*

*Johnson: Stop what you're doing. If you have not finished the Executive Branch worksheet, I'd say most of you are over half completed that task, that's your homework for tonight, and then we'll move onto the Legislature tomorrow after we adopt some basic rules of debate. Any questions?*

**L3: Alvin**

*Alvin: He likes to get you to think. He doesn't just say, okay, over to the textbook, here are the facts, okay, read them, we're moving on. He kind of ... he wants you to think. He said, you know, what if this happens, what if this happens? So he wants you to be more open than just what the textbook says. He wants you to kind of relate to your own personal experiences.*

**L3: Ceretta**

*Ceretta: After going through classes where somebody is telling you to read something and just spit it out, he's there to help you discuss it and understand it.*

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*Johnson: Man, you guys actually worked, and were like [unint.].*

*Jean Claude: I told you.*

*Johnson: That's good, that's good.*

**L3: Alvin**

Alvin: He will not go more than four or five minutes, not even that long. We won't go more than a couple of minutes without having the class respond to whatever he's talking about. He wants to have ... he really wants the class to do more of the talking, you know, than himself.

*Yahani: Two Vice Presidents.*

*Johnson: Two Vice Presidents?*

*Yahani: Yeah, foreign and domestic policy Vice Presidents.*

*Johnson: That's interesting.*

**L3: Chris**

Chris: He lets you explore the topic that you're studying, even if the view is not in the book or he hasn't seen it or heard of it before. All you have to do is show it to him, and he's like oh, okay. And um, that's what I kind of like about him. He's very accepting of everyone's ideas, and everyone's opinions, and he's not very ... he's not putting down your opinion because it's not orthodox.

**L3: Elliott**

Elliott: The fact that it's ... we're given opportunity to just apply what we're learning, in constructive ways. I mean, I guess it's priceless.

**Activity Two: Rules for Convention**

*Johnson: Okay you guys. Take out your Executive Branch worksheet. Okay, were going to get to in a minute, but one of the things I want to start with is, what are going to be the specific rules for debate and passage of the items that the citizens of Permistan will refer to for their constitution. Is it going to be a plurality, which means what?*

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*Chris: That whoever gets the highest percentage.*

*Johnson: Okay. If it's a yes or no and there's no majority, whatever has the most votes, it passes. Or do we want to work on a majority system, for adopting any part of our constitution? What do you guys ...*

*MS: Majority.*

*FS: Majority.*

*Johnson: Okay, we'll probably need to vote on that too, don't we? So we've got to vote to vote. All right, somebody want to shoot out their support for one or the other? Plurality versus majority? Okay, Jean Claude?*

*Jean Claude: I'd like to emphasize that a plurality is unfair. You have five different things, well, one or two, but okay you have five different topics that you want to vote on, and one topic sucks up all the votes that no one really cares about, and then next thing you know, some topic that no one cares about wins. Whereas the majority, the two top, the two top, or three top, whatever we choose, three top topics, get to go onto another election or vote, in which we can choose what is best. So that's why I think we should do that one.*

*Johnson: So you're ultimately siding with, it has to be a majority.*

*Jean Claude: It should. It most definitely will be a majority.*

*Johnson: Okay, Chris and then over here.*

*Chris: Well, unlike my group member, I will give you some valid points about plurality. [laughter] Plurality ... if you have a majority, you won't be able to get anything accomplished, because everyone is going to have their certain issues that they're for and they're going to have their dislikes.*

*So if everyone is ... if there are like ten issues, and everyone raised their hand, there never is going to be a majority. They will never get anything done in this so-called constitutional convention, so we should go to plurality. Someone gets 15% of the vote and that's the highest vote, I think that's what we should do, because we have to get something done.*

*Johnson: Okay. So, you're in favor of plurality but obviously if there's a majority, then that is adopted. Okay, Toussaint*

*Toussaint: Okay, I'm voting for majority. I understood what everyone is saying, you know, that we don't have a lot of time, but I think the issue shouldn't be how much time*

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*we have, but that the ideas would come up with, reflect the thoughts of most of the people in here. And so like someone does win with 15%, there's still 85% of the people don't agree with that, and I think that doesn't reflect the masses in what everybody wants or feels.*

*Johnson: If we go with the plurality system, Toussaint is right. Someone might win with really only 15 to 20 percent on this key issue of how long will the Executive be in office. And clearly 85% of the population might not be happy with that. Is there a more workable solution, to get to that majority, if you think that that's an important principal?*

*Chris: I think Mr. Johnson is trying to have a runoff election like in France, but I'm against a runoff election because the mixture of all these different ideas ...*

**L3 Chris**

*Chris: I can tell that I've progressed in his class, because now I draw from facts, and make my own assumptions and draw my own conclusions, and not just memorization, spitting out what I read the night before. Anyone can memorize anything. But the way that you use the stuff that you read, that's really learning.*

*Johnson: Is that a bad thing, to have a consensus form on an issue where then a majority is formed?*

*Jean Claude: No, not at all.*

*Chris: That's not bad.*

*Chris/Jean Claude: It's rather good.*

*Jean Claude: It shows cooperation.*

*Johnson: It shows cooperation, and if I concede something to you, I hope that you'll grant me a favor later on perhaps, okay? Seretta ...*

*Johnson: You have to be ready to react and be flexible with what the class is doing. If they're not moving as fast as you had hoped, you have to adjust. And expect the unexpected. You really don't know what will be the end result, and there is no magic final constitution or end product that's part of the dynamic of the class that you're involved with.*

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*Johnson: So those in favor of the runoff system, and I probably should have said that would be extra credit, is that right? So, plurality will carry the day.*

**Activity Three: Constitution Creation: Legislative Branch**

*Johnson: The next step is to finish up, or really actually begin the Legislative Branch, okay? Will there be a Senate? Will there be a national assembly? Will the representatives come from single member districts? What is the responsibility of your Legislature? Are they to check to the Executive? Are they going to be stronger than the Executive?  
These are issues we've looked at with these other countries, okay. And what I'd like you to do is get started on this, and hopefully finish it today, and then tomorrow, you really begin the process of voting on these ... voting on the constitution, what you guys have come up with.*

*Johnson: If I was to give someone some advice on beginning this approach, start small, have something that kids read together and the same article with some questions, and they'd answer the questions then in small group. And just see how it works. Notice how you're not in charge and you can walk around the pressure is not on you, it's on the kids. And you'd be surprised with, you know, some kids that maybe seem disinterested all the sudden become interested.*

*Ceretta: I mean, you want enough people to represent like 98 million, and at the same time you want them to get something accomplished.*

*Yahani: We want the states to have equal representation or proportionate representation? equal like one person lives in one state, and a hundred people live in the other state. One person has more votes. I think...*

**L3: Ceretta**

*Ceretta: Just working in the group and working on how to cooperate and compromise and not being too scared to ask for help or offer help, is really important.  
What's the formula that they used for representation, like how many persons ...*

*Yahani: It's a complex formula. I think we should give our I guess version of the House of Representatives more power than [unint.] original descendants.*

*Elliot: Yeah I think so.*

*yahani: I think proportionate representatives should have more power than ...*

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**L3 Ceretta**

Ceretta: We've been working on different parts of the perm. Some people were working more with religion, and I may have been working more with educational, so when we get together and we work on this, a lot more is produced.

Yahani: *And I guess that will be US, UK.*

Ceretta: *We can put China if you want, if you want to use another aspect of another country.*

Elliot: *Put China down.*

Yahani: *Okay.*

Johnson: If I can look around and see that everybody is engaged, that will tell me that it's working. If there's a lot of questions that kids are asking, that doesn't necessarily mean that it's not working. If the questions are on task and are appropriate, then I'll feel that it's working also. But I'd love to be able to look out in the room and see all these groups truly engaged in the activity.

Toussaint: *I mean, there's a theory saying, you know, you'll always have the poor, and the poor will always be with us. But I kind of disagree with that. I don't think you should have a house just for the rich and a house just for the poor.*

Victor: *I'm not necessarily trying to make the houses just for the rich and just for the poor, just one house representing the private industries, one house representing the citizens. And like is said before, the private industries have such an influence, have such an impact on our nation's economy, that they deserve their own party, they deserve their own voice in politics. And as opposed to the proportional representation, what proportional representation really do?*

Tousaint: *I mean it ... like [unint.] the vote we have with like majority and plurality. It shows ... I mean, it's the majority of the people. I'm not saying that people who live in rural Nebraska, you know, shouldn't have a say so or what not. But I am saying where most of the people live, their voices should be heard. I mean, there's more ...*

**L3: Toussaint**

Toussaint: It's the natural human thing too. You learn something and you form, you know, ideas or concepts, but he ... I mean, he allows us to do this instead of, you know,

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this is how it is, and this is how it goes, and this is how it should be. He does a lot of thought provoking. He'll ask questions and he'll play devil's advocate to make everything think. And I think that's something that a lot of classes are missing.

*Victor: Wouldn't this be grounds to split up our Legislative Branch into four houses instead of two?*

*Alvin: Would we want to do that? What ... what ...*

*Toussaint: What would each house represent what would be their powers. Because I don't know, then you ... you're taking the checks and balance thing and like dividing it so hard. I see no point in that.*

*Lauren: Also, would there be a meeting ground for those four houses, like would they come together at one point into a bigger, I guess a bigger assembly?*

*MS: Let's just say that there are a million people, so their [unint.] means, they're represented by four people. So we have 98 million, 98 times four which is ...*

*Brionna: Okay, [unint.] saying how many members of the Parliament we want, and then decide.*

### L3 Brionna

*Brionna: I like learning through simulations, because it really puts you into the situation and really understand how different people think, and how you need to negotiate to come up with, you know, something that works for everyone, or the majority of people.*

*Brionna: Now we have a set number of people in Congress, it doesn't change anymore, so it's not just based on the population anymore .*

*August: All the processes are the same.*

*Brionna: Well I think we should separate them equally.*

*MS: Well divide the region, will be 98 million divided by 31, and this will be the number that you get.*

*Brionna: So many people are in each region.*

*MS: Yeah.*

*MS: That's exactly what I was talking about earlier – three hundred and ninety-two representatives in the national assembly. Because you take the 98 million divided by 250,000, and you get 392. That's equally ... that means each member should represent around 250,000 people. And we're modeling this after what country?*

*Brionna: UK, US, France.*

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- Johnson: I noticed just in the first couple of days watching the kids discuss within their groups things that we had looked at back in January and February. And they were recalling some of these practices in the British system and the French system. Why? Because they had had to do individual assignments and present assignments to the class.  
So there's ownership right from the beginning. And I think that wouldn't have happened in any other situation, if I hadn't given the kids more of a role in the learning process.
- Jade: *Will the Legislative Branch have the authority to actually impeach a member of the Judiciary?*
- FS: *I think they should be able to, I mean, if they appointed them, then it's only necessary that they have the right to impeach them when they do something as unconstitutional.*
- MS: *If we give the Legislative Branch the power to impeach Judicial members, then we're giving a more political aspect to the constitution, do we want our constitution to change so radically because we're ... even change because of political whims at the time?*  
*For example, you know, if there's a strong, you know, anti-immigrant, you know, feeling in the country, would we want to impeach a judge who is upholding the constitution that said previously, immigrants should be able to come from wherever. That's why I'm saying. So I'm not sure if we should have impeachment, because a judge should not have to worry about political pressures if he's trying to uphold the constitution.*
- Jean Claude: *Well, I've got a brand new type of government. I've called it a Noj [ph.], which is basically name spelled backwards. It's called the Try Can Right [ph.]. Okay, we have three branches – domestic, nadivia [ph.] and the foreign.*
- FS: *My whole thing is about checks and balances. I want to make sure there's no tyranny or a dictatorship for that matter. That's why I decided on a two house system, by bicameral government.*
- FS: *That's the same thing I have too.*
- Jean Claude: *I figure that with a tricameral or the Noj, as I call it, you would have a very big check on the Presidency, and, even on the Legislative Branch itself, considering since they're three, all them would have a check on each other.*
- FS: *As far as I'm concerned, having three doesn't help anything at all. All it does is complicate things. You're good enough with just two houses having to check on*



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*each other, instead of bringing in another branch altogether, and basically putting everything in a filibuster. Nothing is going to get done that way.*

**L3 Chris**

Chris: Jean Claude and myself had really wild ideas. We wanted to be like an avante garde whereas Maricia and Nahandra were really conservative. They were scared to venture out. They were scared their resolutions weren't going to be adopted. We weren't too right about our resolution being adopted. We just wanted to get the ideas out there so maybe down the road, we could get someone to change their mind or form some type of coalition where I wash your hand, you wash mine, I get this resolution passed, you get that resolution passed.

Johnson: *Okay, you guys, stop what you're doing. It looks like everybody has finished the Legislative worksheet. I've handed out the Judicial Branch worksheet. That's your homework for tonight. Come into class tomorrow and we will begin debate on the Executive Branch, and hopefully finish that up and move to the Legislative Branch. Okay, any questions before you leave? Good job and we'll see you guys tomorrow.*

**L3: Brionna**

Brionna: When I first got into the government class, I didn't like it too much, because I didn't like rubric at first.. But after, you know, I got other people's opinions and there were other people in my class who like know a lot about politics around the world, after hearing their opinions, I got interested in it too.

**L3: Jade**

Jade: Civics, education is so boring, you know, if you're reading it from a textbook, but if you're actually learning it in the manner that we are, then it makes it ... becomes important to you

**L3: Elliott**

Elliott: Two years ago I wasn't planning on voting, because I wasn't sure that my vote really counted. One thing studying government has done, is I've learned that having a voice is always better than not having a voice. Not voting is a pretty ... is like having no voice.

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**Activity Four: Constitutional Convention**

*Johnson:* Okay, class. As you know, we are about to begin debating and hopefully adopting the constitution for Permistan. And I want to start with the idea of suffrage. And then we'll move to more specific criteria for the Executive Branch. But I want you guys to give me your proposals for suffrage. I'm going to write them down over here, and then after the proposals are out, we're going to do our vote, and we're going to use the plurality system, and then we'll adopt a plank, and then we'll move on, okay. Group one, what did you come up with?

*MS:* Well in most countries they have suffrage at age 18, but we thought that we could lower that a little bit, because we feel that most people are responsible by age 16, so we wanted to make suffrage at age 16.

*Johnson:* Okay, so 16 years. And was it universal?

*MS:* Yes.

*Johnson:* Okay. Group two. What did you guys come up with? If you have something different, please share it.

*Victor:* Well, we feel that suffrage should be given at age 20.

*Johnson:* Universal?

*Victor:* Yes.

*Johnson:* Group three.

*Christine:* We said 18 years old, universal.

*Johnson:* Eighteen. Group four?

*MS:* Okay, we kind of have two provisions. We also wanted to add into suffrage ex-convicts should be able to vote, so we wanted that to be a provision. And I like the idea of being able to vote when you pay income taxes, whatever age that may be, because that's when you kind of have a say in government.

*Johnson:* Okay. Next group.

*Jade:* Only the women in our country have the right to vote [unint.]. Both taxpayers and non-taxpayers who are citizens, at least the age of 18, have the right to vote.

*Johnson:* Okay, the last group, what did you guys come up with?

*Jean Claude:* We said, I said 17, and you need to take a basic test of political efficacy, so you know what's going on in government.

*Johnson:* Okay, Mr. Debrise [ph.]?

*Elliot:* For the group that was 17 years with a knowledge test. Shouldn't it be the right of a person that's a citizen in the country to do what they want to do with their vote?

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*Chris: It shouldn't be the right of every citizen to do what they want to do with their vote. As Aristotle said ... as Plato said it, the government should be ran by the elite, and the elite should be able to select the even higher elites to run government. I think the test would be comprised of just basic issues, what are the key issues of the election, who are the candidates, basic knowledge that you probably learn in grammar school, it's nothing too challenging that a person that's completed secondary school could pass.*

*Jean Claude: Just one side note. We don't sanction all what he said*

*Johnson: My role in the last day is to hopefully just mediate and keep things moving. Not put my opinion into anything. I mean, there's plenty of things that I would have loved to throw in, but you just have to keep your hands off. You want them to debate each other, and they don't have to go through you. You don't want to stifle it.*

### **L3 Brionna**

*Brionna: I think a lot of teenagers are very impressionable, especially at this age, because there's so much going on, we just ... we're looking for an answer to everything. So by him being neutral, we really get to voice our own opinions and don't feel that we're inferior because we're teenagers.*

*Johnson: All right, Ceretta.*

*Ceretta: With the income tax one, would that excluded the unemployed?*

*Johnson: It would exclude anyone who does not pay income tax. So unemployed would be ...*

*Ceretta: So ex-felons ... okay, ex-felons could vote, but not unemployed.*

*Johnson: Yeah, I guess if there are some questions at this point, we'll do it quickly, and then we'll get to our voting. Melvin?*

*Melvin: You say with the income tax at whatever age they may ... so someone 14 could actually start voting for the President?*

*Brionna: Yes. In effect, that would make that possible.*

*Johnson: Okay, what about the argument that you pay sales tax, you have other forms of taxation. Does that ... are you a functioning member of society when you're a taxpayer, even though you may not pay income tax?*

*MS: See that's not a big ... it's a big contribution, but it's not the biggest contribution to I guess a state's budget or something. So, I think that at the time you are able to pay income taxes, you should be able to vote and contribute to what goes on.*

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*Yahani: Do we want to invite ex-felons into our country and say, you can come into our country, commit a crime, but we'll still give you the right to vote. I don't think that's a good way to start off a country.*

*Johnson: August?*

*August: I think ex-felons have paid their debt to society, and they should be permitted to vote. If you committed a crime, and you were pardoned or allowed to go after you served your time, you can vote.*

*Johnson: Right, and I think we're not talking about commit a crime, while you're in prison you're given the right to vote. It's after you have served your sentence and been paroled or granted your freedom that you shouldn't lose that right to participate. Chris, do you want to make a motion?*

*Chris: I move to close all debate, and we're going to choose between income tax and ex-felons.*

*Johnson: Do we have a second.*

*FS: Second it.*

*Johnson: Okay, at this time, let's vote on the issue of the income tax requirement. If you are in favor of having an income tax provision to allow voting, raise your hand. Okay. Those opposed to the qualification that one must pay income tax to vote in Permistan raise your hand. Okay, the income tax provision has been defeated. Let's move onto the issue of felons. Are ex-felons going to be given the right to vote. If you believe that ex-felons should be given the right to vote in Permistan, please raise your hand. Eighteen, okay, all right. Those opposed. Okay. It's clear, ex-felons will be given the right to vote in Permistan. So our very first constitutional provision is, ex-felons have the right to vote. We'll use black ink. So does anyone who put out the 16, the 18, or the 20 years, want to give us a justification for their age requirement? Alvin.*

*Alvin: When one completes high school and matriculates into college, once you get into that college atmosphere, that's when you really start to pick up on the more widespread views of what politics are all about. So we figure at the age of 20, when a student has ... is probably the sophomore year of college and has learned more about the mechanics of how, and the ramifications that politics entails, then they are wise enough and mature enough on a more broader sense to put their vote out there.*

*Elliot: We thought that being 18 years old made more sense, because you really can't ... you can't say that when you're 16 years old, you have a good understanding of*

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*politics. You can't really say at what age somebody will have a good understanding of politics. I mean it depends, it changes from person to person. But for the most part, when you're 18, you have some ... you have a little bit more independence and you're out on your own. And I think should really decide whether or not you should be able to vote or not. And the college thing ... college isn't for everybody, so 20 is kind of ... seems kind of weird. Like everybody doesn't go to college. So that's why we decided 18.*

*Johnson: Chris?*

*Chris: I move to close all debate on the issue of suffrage.*

*Johnson: Is there a second?*

*Student: Second?*

*Johnson: For lack of a better system, we're just going to do it chronologically. So you only get to vote once. Okay? All those in favor of the 16 years of age universal suffrage, please raise your hands. Wow, I get seven.*

*Johnson: I was a little fearful that if we started with something very heavy we wouldn't get through it, so I tried to start with some nuts and bolts like suffrage, and you know, they could see the process at work, we had some quick successes.*

*Johnson: And lastly anyone in favor of the 20 years of age minimum, raise your hand. Okay. Eighteen years of age, citizens are entitled to the right to vote in Permistan. Okay.*

*Johnson: Okay, we're getting somewhere. The next area I want you to think about very quickly with your group is the idea of the Executive, and the term length.*

*Jade: I think yesterday we stated that there would be elections ...*

*MS: Yes, that's perfect. Keeps government fresh.*

*Johnson: Okay, are you ready? You're going to give me your length of term, and term limit So we'll have the last group go first this time.*

*Johnson: The use of group learning and simulations puts the kids into the lesson and they become active participants which I think you can make a connection to them becoming active participants in society. Their status in my class is almost one of equals, at least with each other, definitely and at times with me. And I think that teaches them to speak their mind, to ask questions. There's not a fear factor that I'm going to judge what they do is wrong, or you know, out of place. So my hope is, yeah, I'm teaching them to become active citizens also.*

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- Johnson: Should we do how many houses you want in your Legislative Branch? Is that a good one? You would think most people would go by bicameral? But you forget that we have Jean Claude. All right. Okay, let's move to the Legislative Branch. Come up with the first provision being how many houses or just one house in your Legislative Branch, so take a 15 seconds to confer with your group ...*
- Johnson: I'm a firm believer that the constant teacher centered approach doesn't work. I think, though, you can go a little too crazy and rely on groups too much. And the kids need a mix. They need to kind of every once in awhile be told, here are really the things that I feel as the teacher that are important, but in between those periods, I think that's the time you let the kids get comfortable with the material.*
- Johnson: Okay, are we ready? All right, why don't we start with group four?*
- MS: We have several dissenting views. I'd like to have two houses and the first house which we'll call the national assembly will have 392 members, and the second house I guess would have 191 members.*
- Johnson: Did you have a name for that one?*
- MS: Um, I called it the partitorial [ph.] house. But I'm sure the names could change, so ...*
- Johnson: Can I ask you how they elected, who do they represent?*
- MS: Okay, well the national assembly, that's representative of the population, we were given a population of 98 million people, and here in the United States usually one Congressional representative in the House of Representatives is about 500,000 people. And we believe that that was just a tad bit too much. So what we decided to do was to have one member represent 250,000 citizens in a given area. So we came up with 392 members for the national assembly.*
- Elliot: We want to have two houses, one house would be proportional, but based on the proportion of registered voters, as opposed to the proportion of the entire population, less the poor or nonvoting citizens vote would be [unint.] by the rich members of a state. And what was ... another one was the house with equal representation, equal representation from each state, one representative, two houses bicameral..*
- Johnson: Okay. Next group. Who would like to go next? We'll have you guys go.*

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*Lauren:* We have one house with five subcommittees. There would be 500 members, and each subcommittee represents political, economical, military, social, and religion. The name of our house is Permistan United P.U.

*Johnson:* Okay. Let's go to the next group, which is John Claude.

*Jean Claude:* All right. Well, the number of houses is three. It's called a tricameral. It will never ... it will never ... it will no longer be called Congress, it will be called Noj - N-O-J. Three different houses are the domestic house, then we have a house called the Divia, D-I-V-I-A, and then we have foreign.

*Johnson:* How many members in each?

*Jean Claude:* A hundred fifty in domestic, 150 in international as you call it, and Divia, it will be like proportional representation.

*Johnson:* It's based on population.

*Jean Claude:* Yes, based on population.

*Johnson:* Next one?

*Chris:* I propose that there be no Legislature, there will be no houses, and that all the power will be vested in the Executive. So that's why we needed the knowledge test to keep people who weren't capable of voting, from voting.

### L3 Chris

*Chris:* I don't really believe the government should be governed by the elite. But I do believe that people who should know something about government, and I don't really think government should be a popularity contest. I think the best people for the job should be elected to that position.

*FS:* Okay, we proposed to have two houses, the General Assembly, which represents the people, and the Senate which represents individual state and provinces.

*Johnson:* Okay, are there any comments, questions, that you have of one of these proposals? Yahani.

*Yahani:* Yes, for the 500 Purms PU1 [ph.], when we wanted separation of church and state in our government, not in our government at all, we wouldn't want to have a group that's based on religion or anything like that.

*Tussaint:* Yes, I do agree that there should be separation of church and state but also I would like to bring how realistic is that. Religion challenges people's morals and political views every day, no matter how much you say state and church are separated. It is a part of politics, rather, if we like it or not.

*Yahani:* But, I mean, church is something that you join. It's a voluntary decision to be a part of it. If you don't like what they're doing, you can always leave. And if we

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*allow our church to have some influence on government, then they will ... they're definitely biased against other religions, and we don't want other religions being persecuted in our country.*

*Johnson: Well hold on, because I'm not sure that they explained what the function of that committee would be. It might be to watch over the distinction between church and state. I don't know if they expanded on what is the role of that committee.*

*Toussaint: It wasn't much so to watch over, as also kind of a nice name for our five subcommittees. I'm being honest.*

*Johnson: Okay, and we could, we haven't gotten to the idea of a Bill of Rights so we can still have this plan, but put in something that talks about a separation of church and state. Okay, we have, for sake of time, are going to have to ... I know, I know, you would love to speak. But we really need to vote on this, because of the time constraints.*

*So you know the options. Take five seconds to figure out your vote, all right? We're going to start from the top. The first plan of two houses, a national assembly and a PH, raise your hands if you would like to support that proposal. Debold, all right.*

*MS: I'm happy with number one, okay?*

*Johnson: The next group is the national assembly of 392 members. If you are in favor of that unicameral system, raise your hand. Double the vote of the first one. The next bicameral proposal with the 310 in one house and 31 in another ... raise your hand if you're in favor of plan number 3. All right, hat would be four for that one. The next plan, the P.U., of 500 hermits [ph.] and one house, all right, raise your hand, if you're in favor of P.U. Okay, the much anticipated triad system, the tricameral, please raise your hand, three houses. All right, the anti-legislative plan, those in favor of no Executive ... okay, and lastly the General Assembly with the Senate two houses, please raise your hand if you support that last plan. Oh my, a tie. We need to have a runoff. So we've got to do this quickly. Make your mind up right now. So if you're in favor of the 500 member P.U., please raise your hand and hold it up, hold it up ... all right, put your hands down. If you're in favor of the GA and Senate, the General Assembly and the Senate, please raise your hand. All right. All right, hold on, one second. Now you know what, we've got a General Assembly and a senate, but more importantly we have a cake that represents the beginning of this constitution for the country of Permistan. Congratulations.*



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*Elliot: The reason they have more power in the House is because they have a large [unint.] people who don't vote.*

*Brionna: They're victimizing the [unint.] so it's not fair.*

*Yahani: So you're saying it's okay to victimize people?*

*Brionna: That's what you're doing. You're saying that they're victims.*

*Johnson: He is broken up over his triads.*

*Jean Claude: Yeah, my tricameral, it was supposed to work.*

**L3 Chris**

Chris: I can't believe that these people actually came up with such a great constitution and in that short period of time, and the compromises they had to make, and the sacrifice of time, effort, money – there's no way I probably could have done it. I would have walked out.

**L3: Toussaint**

Toussaint: You know, you can't move on without knowing your past, and also governments are formed from a country's history, or the people's history. And so, you know, like, a lot of people say that our constitution was written in maybe a year or two. Really our constitution was being written, you know, since people first landed, because their past experiences gave them the ideological beliefs that they had to form our constitution.

**L3: Victor**

Victor: What we've come to acknowledge is that our forefathers ... we have profoundly deeper respect for our forefathers. Because every time we want to come up with a definite answer for how many houses are we going to have, what's the election process going to be like, that just leads into more questions. It's like everything is so complicated, and it's impossible to actually come up with a logical solution after just three days. So we have deep respect for the men that came before us and did it, and did it well.

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