

Community Power Simulation

Time: 30–40 min

Purpose: To practice community decision-making through a simulation.

Skills: Communication, Conflict resolution, Cooperation, Inquiring, Patience, Paying attention, Problem solving, Self-control, Team building

You
will
need...



- 20–30 participants
- Middle school age participants or older
- Chart paper, markers, “Community Power Game” worksheets (one per group; see attached)
- Enough space for five groups to work independently

Before
You
Begin



- In this activity participants will be working in five groups. Consider whether you will assign groups before the activity or guide participants to choose their own groups.
- Prepare the reflection questions you will ask participants in the debrief.

Directions

Introduce the activity Community Power Simulation. Use this time to reinforce any established expectations that are important for participants to remember during the activity.

Explain to participants that they will be divided into five groups and each group will represent a certain role in a community, and each role has a different set of values and interests.

Explain that each group will separately assess a problem facing the community by filling out a worksheet, then will work together to solve the problem as a whole group through the frame of their assigned role.



Divide participants into five equally sized groups and **distribute** to each group the worksheet and handout describing its role.

Tell each group to choose a recorder (someone to take notes on their group’s conversation) and a reporter (someone to share their conclusions to the whole group’s).

Read the community problem to all participants. **Direct** each group to discuss the problem from the perspective of their assigned role, complete the “Community Power Worksheet,” and then plan how to present their possible solutions to the problem to all participants at a “town hall meeting.”



Give time (ten minutes) for groups to work on finding solutions to the community problem in line with their group’s role.

DIRECTIONS CONTINUED

Gather the groups back together for the “town hall meeting.”

Post a piece of chart paper labeled “action plan” so it is visible to the whole group.

Explain that addressing community problems is hard work, and sometimes people need to make individual sacrifices and compromises in order to benefit the whole community.

Ask each group’s reporter to present their group’s message and perspective (interests, values, and possible solutions).

Allow for discussion of each group’s presentation with the whole group.

As groups share their message, **point out** similarities and differences between the groups.

If groups agree on a point or solution, **record** it on the chart paper.

As groups come to agreement about an action plan, or as it becomes clear that a workable solution is not possible, **stop** the simulation and **begin** the debrief.



Explain to participants that now they will reflect on how they experienced the activity.

Debrief

Debrief the activity with participants. Remember, this activity is only as effective as your debrief. This is your opportunity to help participants connect the activity to personal experiences, actions, and beliefs. You will want to reinforce any skills or beliefs you are hoping participants will carry beyond the activity.

For more on facilitating debriefs, refer to the [Debriefing Tip Sheet](#) on our Digital Activity Center.

We’ve included some suggested questions below to get you started.

Ask:

What happened during the activity?

How did it feel to play the role you were given? Why?

What kind of power did your group have? What gives a group its power?

In your life, what kind of power do you have?

Are you happy with the solution? Why or why not?

What did you learn about your community from participating in this activity? What did you learn about yourself?

How can we apply the experience of this activity to our community at large?

Thank participants for taking part in the activity.

Community Power Simulation: Worksheet

Directions: Using the information from your group's assigned role as well as the problem facing the community, answer the following questions concerning your group's values, interests/goals, and power. Then discuss and record potential solutions to the community problem.

Role: _____

Summarize the problem that the community is facing:

Position in the community:

- What are you responsible for? What decisions are you able to make?

- Who do you have more power than?

- Who has more power than you?

Values, Interests, and Goals:

- What is important to you?

- What are your goals?

- What are your resources?

- Why would you want to help solve this problem? How does this problem affect you?

- What would you like to see as the outcome?

- What are you willing to compromise in this situation?

Potential Solutions:

a.

b.

c.

Community Power Simulation: Community Problem

The Problem:

The after-school program sponsored by the city is suffering from extremely low attendance. The program is housed in a new, state-of-the-art community center that is surrounded by playing fields and beautiful gardens. Furthermore, the program is free to participants (the only free program in the city); the city government pays for the program with tax dollars. However, the program remains extremely unpopular with students.

Despite the program's brand new facilities (which include a gym, art room, playing fields, kitchen, and game room), the after-school program does not have a lot to offer students. There are not enough counselors to run programs, classes, or even to help students with homework. The program does not have any equipment or supplies. As a result, many students (especially older students) choose not to attend the program. Therefore, students are bored and unsupervised after school. They are getting into trouble, as well as getting involved in unsafe situations.

Because the program's attendance is so low, the mayor is not willing to allocate more money to the after-school program. In fact, he wants to cut the program from the city budget and make the new community center into a private country club for adults. However, the city government wants to do whatever it can to save the program.

Community Power Simulation: Group Roles

Role: City Government

Your goals are to serve the community, make sure that the voters remain happy, and save the after-school program. The after-school program's life is in your hands. The only person who can veto your decision is the mayor. You would like to see the program receive funding for equipment, supplies, more counselors, and programs. However, there is absolutely no money to spare in the budget and the mayor will not approve allocating new funds. You are willing to listen to any ideas to save the program.

Role: Business Leaders

Your goals are to make money and keep as much of the money you make as possible. You do not want to spend money unless it helps you in the end and you do not want to see the city government raise your taxes. You could easily afford to sponsor and fund the after-school program run by the city; you always welcome good publicity for your companies. Furthermore, you employ a number of parents of children who would benefit from this after-school program. However, you do not see a reason to fund the program unless it will improve your business.

Role: After-school Program Coordinators

Your goal is to raise the attendance of your after-school program as quickly as possible. You are afraid that if you do not raise the attendance you will be shut down by the city. You know that students do not come to your program because they feel it is boring. If you had the resources, you would love to hire more people to provide students with fun classes. You would also like to meet your parent's needs by providing homework help to students. You are willing to do almost anything to obtain more funding for your program.

Role: Students

You want to have a fun place to go for after-school. The after-school program in the new community center is not fun. The community center itself is nice—it has a great gym, playing fields, art room, and game room. However, there are no equipment and supplies to use in these great rooms. During after-school, your parents want you to do your homework, but there is no one at the city's program to help you.

Role: Parents

You want your children to have a place to be after the school day ends that is safe, fun, educational, and affordable. You also feel that it is a priority that your children are able to have a supportive space to do their homework, as well as receive any help that they might need. The logical place to send your children after school is to the city's program; however, they refuse to go. You know that the program needs money to obtain resources and supplies, but you are not sure where to turn to find them. Lastly, you do not want to see your taxes raised to fund this program.