Education Programme

ACTION PROJECT IDEAS

📄 LEARNING OUTCOME

This section encourages students to do some research in order to answer the questions raised. The section also gives students ideas for holding mock elections and debates.

1. The Oireachtas in our Community

This action project encourages students to learn about politics in their community. Students are asked to research the following Core Questions:

Core Questions:

What Dáil constituency do we live in?

What areas does our Dáil constituency include?

How many seats does our constituency now have?

How many will it have at the next general election?

Who are our local TDs/Senators?

What political parties do our local TDs/Senators belong to?

What are the backgrounds of our local TDs and Senators?

What roles/functions do our local TDs/Senators have in Dáil Éireann/Seanad Éireann?

Students then make a PowerPoint Presentation/Wall Display of their Public Representatives.

2. The Oireachtas in our Country

This project encourages students to learn about national political parties. Students are asked to research the following Core Questions:

Core Questions:

Which political parties are currently represented in Dáil Éireann/Seanad Éireann?

How many TDs/Senators does each party have?

How many Independent TDs were elected at the last general election?

Who is the current leader of each political party and what is their background?

Students then make a PowerPoint Presentation/Wall Display on the political parties in Ireland.

3. Hold a Mock Election

Organise a mock election in the class using the PR system. Holding a mock election is a great way of involving students and demonstrating that politics is far from a spectator sport. At the outset of the process the class needs to decide:

What position are people going to be elected to?

How many positions are going to be filled?

Following agreement, candidates have to put their name forward for election.

At this stage students should also be informed about the PR system and how they indicate their preferences by voting 1, 2, 3… Once this work has been completed it's over to the students. Among the committees that could be formed to complete this task are:

Election committees:

Each candidate has a small team to help with their election campaign. Among the tasks that could be assigned are:

Policy: Draw up a manifesto or action plan for the candidate

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Policy: Draw up a manifesto or action plan for the candidate

Publicity: Ensure that students know about the candidate and their manifesto

Canvassing: Ensure that the candidate meets as many voters as possible

Register of Electors Committee:

This group of students will collect the names and address of every student who is entitled to vote. This information is then published in a register of electors.

This committee will also design the ballot paper to be used for the election with a picture and the name of each candidate on it. The committee will also establish a polling station, with a ballot box, on polling day and ensure that only those registered to vote cast a ballot.

Election Count Committee:

This Committee will count the votes. The Committee will need to understand terms such as:

Quota

Surplus

Distribution

Elimination

This group of students will appoint a 'presiding officer' who is in charge of the count and officially announces the result. The presiding officer will also establish the quota.

The formula for calculating the quota is:

Divide the total valid votes by the number of seats plus one, ignore any fraction and add one. As an example, if there are 1,000 valid votes and four seats the quota is calculated as follows:

1,000 : (4 + 1) = 200 and add 1 = 201.

The count committee will count the votes in public. After each count is finished the result will be declared.

The first count details the first preference votes gained by each candidate. If any candidate exceeds the quota they are deemed elected. The number of votes by which a candidate has exceeded the quota is known as a surplus.

When a candidate exceeds the quota and is elected, the surplus is then distributed. This involves looking at the second preferences on the surplus votes and adding them to the votes of the remaining candidates.

If no candidate is elected then the lowest ranked candidate is eliminated. All the candidate's votes are examined and the 2nd preferences are added to the remaining candidates in the race. If there are no 2nd preferences on a ballot paper (i.e. someone has just given their number one vote to one candidate and not used any of their other preferences) then no candidate is awarded that vote and it is called non-transferable.

This process of elimination and distribution of surpluses continues until the seats are filled.

4. Hold a Mock Oireachtas Debate

Keep an eye on the Oireachtas schedule on www.oireachtas.ie and organise a debate that mirrors a topic raised in the Oireachtas.

Students should be divided into Government and opposition groups. You will also need to appoint a Ceann Comhairle to chair the debate and tellers, one from the opposition side and one from the Government side, to count the votes and declare the result.