

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE IN THE CLASSROOM

A. *Functions of parliamentary procedure:*

- i. Controls are placed on the person who is running the meeting.
- ii. The chairman is provided a structure with which to run the meeting.
- iii. The person who has the floor can be secure in knowing that no one can interfere with his or her speech.

B. *Parliamentary Procedure in practice:*

- i. The teacher or student serving as chairperson should be addressed as Mr. Chairman (Ms, Mrs. Madame).
- ii. Students are addressed as Mr. or Ms. Followed by their last name.
- iii. Students 'obtain the floor' only with the permission of the Chairperson.
- iv. A three-minute time restriction is imposed on any student who has the floor. The person who has the floor may make a request for more time. "Mr. Chairman, I request two more minutes". The Chairman has the option of accepting or denying the request.
- v. Flexibility: The Chairman can request a motion from the floor to change the classroom rules so that each student who obtains the floor has thirty seconds to speak (or any other time allotment).
- vi. Yielding: Students may request time from a student who has the floor only when the speaker has concluded his or her remarks. This request should be made verbally, refraining from the traditional hand-raising that typifies the traditional classroom. The speaker should signal the end of their commentary, and make the floor available for additional remarks. The next speaker might say, "would the gentlewomen, Ms. Sanchez, please yield thirty seconds?" The student who has the floor does not have to accept this request. Those with control of the floor should make a concerted effort to yield the floor to any individual who has not spoken, and desires to do so, on any given day.
- vii. Questions are asked as a 'Point of Information' only when the speaker has concluded his or her remarks. The person to whom the 'Point of Information' is being directed does not have to respond. Questions may also be asked through a request to yield, bypassing the chairperson.
- viii. Mentioning the name of another student automatically grants control of the floor to this respective student.
- ix. 'Point of Order' is used to identify a failure to follow procedure.
- x. A motion to 'Suspend the Rules' is requested by the chairman when the lesson plan calls activities that do not require the use of parliamentary procedure.

C. *Notes on Points of Information and Yielding:*

- i. A 'Point of Information' or a 'Request to Yield' are both appropriate devices to use when trying to seek information from the person who has the floor. A point of information will require less time and demand a direct response. When using a point of information the Chairman must be sure that the response does not stray from the question.
- ii. 'Points of Information' must be directed toward the chairman even though the question may be for someone who has the floor. The chairman should restate the question and direct it to the person to whom it is directed. The chairman acts as a filter, siphoning off some of the emotion. The reply is also directed through the chairman. A 'Point of Information' may be directed to anyone if no one has the floor.
- iii. A 'Request to Yield' should be used when the desired goal is to inject an additional perspective, information, or a challenging statement into the discussion. This device should be used in an atmosphere of cooperation and congeniality.