



2.2 | democratic voting processes

CRITERIA-BASED RANKING

Using copies of the Issue Selection Grid (Handout 2F), individually rank each issue against each criterion, then add the totals for each issue. The results are compiled into a single chart that allows students to compare how each issue across the various criteria. For example, a high score in interest might be off-set by a low score in feasibility. **Tips Card 17** offers an example of individual ranking. Based on the individual rankings, fill in a class grid with tallies of individual scores on each criterion. Add the grand total for each issue. The maximum score for each criterion is [total number of students] x [highest score].

DOT VOTING

Write each of the remaining issues on the board in large letters. Distribute three dot stickers to each student. Explain the rules of voting: students may use their three votes in any way they choose, from one vote on three different issues, to all three votes on one issue. Invite students to walk up to the board and place their dots next to the issue(s) of their choice.

MAJORITY VOTE

Review the criteria chosen by the group. Give students time to review, in pairs or alone, which issue best meets the set criteria. Hand out pieces of paper and have students write down one issue each. Collect the papers and count how many votes each issue was given. If students often believe that majority rule is the end-all, be-all, and that whatever the majority wants is fine—without any regard for minority ideas—then this is an opportunity to discuss a number of factors:

- There is a difference between majority rule and consensus building.
- Majority Rule is a good tool to begin the conversation or to narrow the options so that the group can use consensus to reach a final decision. It is important to facilitate the group so that those who “lose” the vote stay vested.
- Our political system is based on majority rule with strong protections that guarantee respect for minority views.

HUMAN CONTINUUM

Two signs, one saying “High” and the other “Low,” could be placed on opposite sides of the wall (or on the floor) to form the ends of a continuum. For each issue, students stand somewhere along the continuum to demonstrate their ranking. A student standing at the high end describes why he or she has taken that position; similarly, a student at the low end describes her or his reasoning. Then hold a brief discussion. After discussion, students have the opportunity to change their location on the continuum. Repeat this for each issue. Tally the results on a poster or on the board. If the votes do not identify a preferred issue, have more discussion before casting another vote.



HEADS DOWN, THUMBS UP

Incorporating at least one type of anonymous voting can allow students a chance to vote without feeling self-conscious about their choice—and may reduce the “group-think” and peer influence that can sometimes dominate classrooms.