

Balancing Voices: Approach to School Governance During Implementation of Innovations: Role Play Simulations

What is this?

This is a simulation exercise that asks participants to act out various scenarios playing roles (Principal, Teacher with mediocre test scores, Teacher with low test scores, Community member, District administrator). Participants engage in discussion in groups of 4-5 to come to a decision regarding a scenario. They can use the rules as currently understood in their district or the Balancing Voices rules. Participants can engage in group or survey debriefing when done.

Who is this for?

Educators in a district or school and those they work with who are considering implementing an innovation or examining their current governance. This is especially relevant for schools or districts considering the implementation of place-based or project-based STEM curricula which require new forms of collaboration and therefore sensitivity to school governance .

What are the Desired Outcomes?

Participants become more sensitized to issues of governance and more aware of their current forms of governance, in terms of decision-making power, transparency, explicitness.

How to Play

Form a group of 4-5 with others in your school or in a learning community. Each player will play one of the following roles in a simulation: Principal, Teacher with mediocre test scores, Teacher with low test scores, Community member, District administrator. More than one person can play a role, and roles can be added to reflect your context. Once roles have been chosen, play out one of the scenarios using one of the two sets of rules (A or B). Once the group discussion is done either by coming to a consensus or reaching a time limit (e.g., 20 minutes) participants can engage in group or survey debriefing.

Rules A (Black cards)

- *Adoption of reform*: The state or district determines a school's curriculum
- *Evaluation of reform*: The success of a new curriculum or reform is evaluated in terms of changes in test scores 1-2 years after it is implemented
- *Community control*: a community elects the members of a school board, which oversees all educational matters including the hiring and firing of administrators and teachers. Community members can also informally speak directly to other stakeholders.
- *Evaluation of a principal*: A district superintendent can fire or remove a principal at the end of a school year because the principal is ineffective or negligent.
- *Evaluation and dismissal of a tenured teacher*: 1.5 years of documentation and improvement plan plus 1-2 years of legal process is required for a principal to remove a teacher.
- *Resolving Differences between Teachers and Principals*: disagreements between teachers and principals regarding school policies and practices are resolved in favor of the principal unless a teacher files and wins a formal grievance.

Roles

- Principal
- Teacher with mediocre test scores (value added)
- Teacher with low test scores (value added)
- Community member
- District administrator

Rules B (Red cards)

- *Adoption of Reform*: No *school-wide* reform, or change in policy or practice may be implemented unless the principal and at least a majority of the teachers approve the change.
- *Evaluation of Reform*: The effects of any change in practices or policies on student achievement are not evaluated in terms of standardized test scores for three years after the initial vote to adopt the change.
- *Community control*: a community elects the members of a school board, which oversees all educational matters including the hiring and firing of administrators. Community is represented on local school council which votes on principal evaluation (see below).
- *Evaluation of a principal*:

A principal's evaluation includes:

 - A vote of the majority of the local school council (50% district, 50% parents)

And

 - an option for teachers to express concern either by 50% signing a petition or 20% submitting for leave
- *Evaluation and dismissal of a teacher*: The primary union representative will participate throughout an expedited evaluation process of 1.5 years, providing a signature of approval indicating the process is being fairly adhered to and implemented. This will take place during all evaluation checkpoints. This provides less of a basis for grievance on process.
- *Resolving Differences between Teachers and Principals*: For any decision in which the teachers vote differently than the principal the principal must explain his/her reasoning in writing and the teachers may appeal to the School Council.

Roles

- Principal
- Teacher with mediocre test scores (value added)
- Teacher with low test scores (value added)
- Community member
- District administrator

Scenarios

Scenario 1: A principal would like to remove a teacher whose has consistently low test scores (value-added). The teacher has one or two close colleagues in the school. Setting: urban high school

Scenario 2: The teachers are divided on pedagogy (e.g., 50% seek to implement a new reform and 50% prefer current practices) and the principal is not prone to action, but is well supported by the district. Setting: urban elementary school. Standard rules (A rules).

Switch roles, BV team assigns.

Scenario 3: Five teachers went to a conference and discovered a new writing curriculum that they would like their school to adopt. Setting: urban elementary school. (B rules).

Informal debrief:

What influenced people's good will toward process.

Scenario 4: There's new legislation that allows the district to determine the school schedule. A principal wants to adopt a year-round schedule (drawing on some evidence supporting this especially for disadvantaged children). Setting: suburban high school

Scenario 2b. a principal is convinced of a new pedagogical approach based on exposure to evidence at a summer training.

Group Debriefing

- *What decision was made?*
- *Whom did it affect?*
- *Was it fair (procedural fairness)?*
- *Who benefitted?*
- *Legitimacy of authority figures?*
- *How to move forward with decision-making process? Invite BV team back?*

Survey Debriefing

1. EXPLANATION OF THE RESEARCH and WHAT YOU WILL DO:

- You are being asked to participate in a research study of how schools make decisions. The results will help us help school think about their decision-making processes and implement new approaches to decision-making.
- You will be asked to participate in a set of scenarios regarding school decision making, and then to complete a survey about the process and outcomes.
- You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

2. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW:

- Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your grade or evaluation.

3. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:

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If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher (name and complete contact information: mailing address, e-mail address, phone number).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

4. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this survey.

Participant

ID _____

(Choose a unique ID made up to numbers, letters or symbols; note and remember your ID so you can use the same ID on all surveys you take.)

Please circle the set of rules that you were assigned

- A Rules
- B Rules

Please circle the statement from each pair below that describes the rules that governed your simulation:

Reform Adoption (Circle one of the statements below)

- The state or district determined the adoption of reform
- The principal and the teachers voted on reform

Evaluation of reform (Circle one of the statements below)

- A reform is not evaluated using standardized tests until the reform has been implemented for three years
- The success of a new curriculum or reform is evaluated in terms of changes in test scores after it is implemented

Evaluation of a principal (Circle one of the statements below)

- A principal's evaluation includes a vote of the majority of the local school council and an option for teachers to express concern by signing a petition or submitting for leave
- A district superintendent can fire or remove a principal at the end of a school year because the principal is ineffective or negligent

Evaluation and dismissal of a teacher

- Due process (3 years of documentation) is required for a principal to remove a teacher
- The principal has an expedited path to dismissing teachers. The primary union representative will participate throughout the expedited evaluation process, providing a signature of approval indicating the process is being fairly adhered to and implemented.

Scenario number: _____

Role played in the Scenario: _____

Group # _____. Card you drew (e.g., jack of clubs) _____

1. Outcome Dependence (effect on individual)

<i>Darken one circle on each line</i>	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly Agree 4
1a) My livelihood would be significantly impacted by today's decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1b) Today's decision would not have affected me much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Procedural Fairness

<i>Darken one circle on each line</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2a) The processes for decision-making were clear to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2b) I was able to voice my opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2c) I noticed that some people/groups were treated unfairly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2d) The decision was reached in a fair and equitable manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2e) Everyone had an equal opportunity to speak.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2f) It is fair to decide issues like the one today in the manner we did.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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3. Outcome favorability

<i>Darken one circle on each line</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3a) I found the outcome personally favorable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3b) I was frustrated by today's decision.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Legitimacy of authority figures

<i>Darken one circle on each line</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4a) I found the principal in the simulation trustworthy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4b) I believe the principal placed a high priority on the school's best interest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. What rules were you following?

<i>Mark only one</i>	<i>Please indicate how many times you have been assigned these rules before</i>
A	1
B	2

6. Please indicate your gender

<i>Mark only one</i>	
Male	<input type="radio"/>
Female	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>

7. Have you ever been a teacher?

<i>If yes, please indicate what grade level(s) you taught</i>	
Yes	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>

8. Please indicate years of experience in the following:

	<i>Please indicate number of years below.</i>	<i>Please indicate your last academic year below.</i>
Teaching experience		
Years schooling in the U.S.		

9. Have you ever been on a school board?

<i>Mark only one</i>	
Yes	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>

10. Are you a parent of a student in a public school?

<i>Mark only one</i>	
Yes	<input type="radio"/>
No	<input type="radio"/>

11. In the space provided below, please briefly describe the outcome of your group's simulation.
