Professional learning activity:
Using democratic decision-making processes

**Activity suggested duration:** 40 minutes with pre-reading (60 minutes without pre-reading)

**Activity description:**

In this activity, participants explore a model for student democratic participation and some ideas for decision-making in the classroom.

Primary participants read an Australian Electoral Commission ‘Democracy Rules’ resource on representative democracy. Secondary participants read an Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) article describing a mock congress activity implemented in the United States.

Participants then brainstorm a list of opportunities they see for decision-making protocols in the school’s Civics and Citizenship program, and use a simple sticky note ranking process to choose three to focus on.

**Required resources:** whiteboard or butcher’s paper and markers, sticky notes, printouts of the below resources for discussion

**Learning leader preparation:**

* Read 3.1.
* Read [Centre for Teaching Excellence: Group decision-making](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/group-work/group-decision-making).
* Primary participants:
* Read [Democracy Rules: You and me, the decision-makers](https://education.aec.gov.au/democracy-rules/files/topic1.pdf).
* Secondary participants:
* Read [ASCD: Debates and Conversations – From the Ground Up](https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/debates-and-conversations-from-the-ground-up).

**Participant preparation:**

* Read 3.1.
* Read [Centre for Teaching Excellence: Group decision-making](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/group-work/group-decision-making).
* Primary participants:
* Read [Democracy Rules: You and me, the decision-makers](https://education.aec.gov.au/democracy-rules/files/topic1.pdf).
* Secondary participants:
* Read [ASCD: Debates and Conversations – From the Ground Up](https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/debates-and-conversations-from-the-ground-up).

Activity steps

1. Whole group brainstorm:
* Participants have a chance to read and annotate the pre-reading. (optional; 20 minutes)
* What do we know about decision-making protocols? (10 minutes)
1. Small-group discussion: Which of the strategies or processes in these resources could be useful in our context? How could they be adapted? (10 minutes)
2. Whole-group discussion: What opportunities do you see to implement democratic decision-making processes in our Civics and Citizenship classes? Write a list of the responses on the whiteboard or butcher’s paper. (15 minutes)
3. Participants are given three sticky notes to place a ‘vote’ on their favourite items from the list generated in the previous step. The three suggestions with the highest number of sticky notes after this activity are chosen to trial. (5 minutes)