



## OUR TOWN: A ROLE PLAY

(45 minutes)

### OBJECTIVE

Students play the parts of city officials, members of boards and commissions, and ordinary citizens. In their roles, they examine both imaginary scenarios and actual issues being addressed in the community. Students understand local governments have authority to make and enforce laws.

### MATERIALS

The Roles and Scenarios handout; Role Biography handout; conference badges.

### GET READY

- ✓ Duplicate the *Role Biography* handout for each student in the class.
- ✓ Assign each student a different role from the list provided. Obtain conference badges and use markers or a word processor to label the badges with the roles from the list. (The list can be found on the *Roles and Scenarios* handout.)
- ✓ Complete the scenarios list on the *Roles and Scenarios* handout with at least two possible scenarios (preferably ones that are currently being addressed in the community).
- ✓ Move desks so that groups of four can consult during the role play.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Distribute badges and the *Role Biography* handout and give students five minutes to fill out Parts I and II of the handout.
- ✓ Choose a scenario from the list.
- ✓ Ask students, in their roles, to record their reactions to the scenario in Part III of the *Role Biography*. Give them five minutes to do so.

- ✓ Say, *At your tables, please express your community concerns and opinions with the other three “townspeople.” After a few minutes, we will hold the Town Meeting to discuss the issue and we will hear from all of you.*
- ✓ After the table consultations, ask the City Clerk (a student you have given the role to because of leadership abilities) to run the Town Meeting, which can last as long as you choose.
- ✓ Once the Town Meeting is over, choose another scenario, preferably a “real life” one from the community, and have the students respond to it.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *As a student, did you personally disagree with what you had to present as, for instance, the town police chief?*
- ★ *As you can see, officials and citizens have to arrive at compromises. Is there an issue you can think of that seems to call for compromise? Can you suggest compromise solutions for that issue?*
- ★ *Would you like to have any of these roles in your community for real?*

### MORE!

You may continue the role play for several days, adding a research component: consulting the media and/or the real people in town who hold the simulated positions to see what they think about the issues.

### SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT:

- ★ *Students can complete the Role Biography handout.*



# ROLES AND SCENARIOS



## Roles:

- Mayor
- Building Inspector
- Business License/Sales Tax Manager
- City Attorney
- City Clerk
- City Council Member
- City Manager
- Community Center Director
- Director of Libraries
- Facilities Maintenance Director
- Finance Officer
- Fire Commissioner
- Garbage Department Director
- Insurance Officer
- Parks and Recreation Director
- Personnel Director
- Police Chief
- Public Information Officer
- Purchasing Officer
- Superintendent of Schools
- Transportation Director
- Member, Design Board
- Member, Arts Commission
- Member, Human Relations Commission
- Member, Planning and Zoning Board
- Downtown Department Store Owner
- Elderly Retiree
- Wheelchair-bound Citizen
- Parent of Four Children

## Scenarios:

- A large shopping center will be built in town.
- The community wants a minor league baseball team.
- Parking problems in the town center are keeping business away.
- Some citizens complain that the design rules of the historic district are too restrictive.
- A crafts fair is proposed.
- The number of homeless people on Main Street is rising quickly.
- There are gangs at the high school.
- Drug crimes are up.
- An automobile parts plant is coming to town.
- Add here two actual situations in your town that are currently being addressed:

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# ROLE BIOGRAPHY



Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

### PART I: GET A LIFE!

Invent for yourself some background, family, personality traits, etc.

(Example: "I am a 30-year-old man with a young family and I've been the Parks and Recreation Director for only two months. I'm likely to back down in a clash with older, more established community leaders.")

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### PART II: MY JOB IS TO...

List the most important concerns you have in your role in the city's welfare:

(Example: "As the Fire Commissioner, I am most worried about fire safety for all the citizens, through enforcement of the fire code.")

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### PART III: HERE'S MY REACTION

For each scenario in the role play, give your response to possible benefits and problems in your area of concern.

(Example: If the city holds a crafts fair, the Garbage Department Director wants exhibitors to clean up after themselves; wants no disruptions of the refuse removal schedule; wants a budget for additional trash cans on the streets, etc.)

**SCENARIO 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCENARIO 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

My reaction: \_\_\_\_\_

My reaction: \_\_\_\_\_

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