

Town Hall Meeting Guide

Purpose

A town hall meeting is an informal arena where citizens can voice their opinions on issues that affect the community at large. Everybody is welcome, but people invested in the issue are usually the ones who express their concerns and vocalize objections. The primary purpose of these meetings is to get feedback, whether positive or negative, from concerned citizens. However, the benefits extend beyond mere feedback. Town hall meetings also foster diverse opinions, authentic communication, mutual understanding, and transparency between organization and citizen.

We will host a town hall meeting before a hypothetical district school board and debate the superintendent's proposal to eliminate high school sports. You will be assigned a role during the meeting and expected to play 'devil's advocate' by responding to the arguments made by other attendees.

Format/Agenda

1. **Presentation:** The school district superintendent will present the proposal to eliminate high school sports. He or she will explain the necessity of the proposal, the reasons for its adoption, and the benefits of its passage. (Reasons can be taken directly from the article, "The Case Against High School Sports.") **(10 minutes)**
2. **Question and Answer:** Attendees raise their hands and ask the superintendent questions about the proposal and any issues that were not addressed in the original presentation. These questions should be similar to the questions found in strategy one in the "How to Play 'Devil's Advocate'" handout. **(10 minutes)**
3. **Audience Participation:** Attendees raise their hands to signify they would like to voice their opinions about the proposal. Each attendant should strive to refute specific points made in the superintendent's presentation by implementing the strategies found in "How to Play 'Devil's Advocate'" handout. Attendees may also object to and critique points made from previous speakers. Each speaker will have three minutes to quickly make their points and objections. **(30 minutes)**
4. **Voting and Results:** Board members vote on whether or not to pass the proposal based solely on the quality of the arguments on both sides of the issue and present their findings to the audience. **(5 minutes)**

Character Roles – (28 total)

1. School District Superintendent
2. Students in Favor of the Proposal (2)
3. Students in Opposition of the Proposal (2)
4. Band Member
5. Cheerleader
6. Student Athletes (2)
7. Student Sports Fan
8. Parents (2)
9. Parent Advocate whose son sustained brain injuries while playing football
10. Coaches (2)
11. Athletic Director
12. Teachers (2)
13. Sports Booster Club Member
14. Administrator
15. High School Alumni
16. School District Board Members (5)
17. Community Sponsor
18. College Recruiter

You will select a random card that contains a specific role that you will play during the town hall meeting. You are to prepare for the meeting by fulfilling your respective expectations.

Expectations

Expectations of Superintendent	Expectations of Community Members	Expectations of School Board Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the article, "The Case Against High School Sports," to prepare a presentation in favor of adopting the proposal to eliminate high school sports. • Clearly present the need for the proposal. • Clearly present the reasons/evidence for the proposal. • Clearly describe how this proposal would be carried out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for the town hall meeting by completing a "Character Card." • Write your speech that you will present at the meeting using the following format: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.) State your name and your involvement in the issue. 2.) Present your opinion based on the perspective of your character. 3.) Give evidence that supports your opinion. 4.) Employ 'devil's advocate' strategies to argue against the proposal or the positions of fellow attendees. (This section is adaptable based on what is said at the meeting.) 5.) Conclude your speech by thanking the school board for initiating the town hall meeting. • Listen and take notes during the Superintendent's presentation. • Ask good questions of the Superintendent as well as previous speakers. • Listen to arguments made by other stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take notes during the arguments. • Decide as a group which pieces of evidence are the most important. • Decide which perspective is the most convincing. • Prepare a list of reasons why one side is more persuasive than the other. • Vote on whether to adopt or reject the proposal. • Present the findings of your vote.

Town Hall Meeting Rules

1. Have no side conversations.
2. One person talks; others listen.
3. Raise your hand to signify that you would like to ask a question or voice an opinion.
4. State your character's role and interest in the proposal when speaking during the meeting.