

**The Effect of an Educational Workshop on High School Future Farmers of America
Parliamentary Procedure Leadership Development Teams**

A Senior Project

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Introduction

Within the California Future Farmers of America Association (FFA), there are a variety of Leadership Development Events (LDE's) including the Parliamentary Procedure contest. Within this contest students sharpen their knowledge through reviewing Robert's Rules of Order and applying this knowledge to an exam as well as a live demonstration. Through this contest, students also improve upon their public speaking skills and research agricultural education and industry issues. Students compete in several invitational contests before entering the sectional, regional, and state levels of competition where their advanced knowledge comes into play with a wider audience. Over the span of California, there are several FFA chapters who participate in the Parliamentary Procedure CDE, however, most of the teams and invitational contests lie in the more northern part of California, with the most Southern contest being in Modesto, California. During an interview with Anna Bates from San Luis Obispo High School, who has coached several nationally ranking Parliamentary Procedure teams, she stated "the reason we travel up North for competitions is due to the lack of competition and presence of Parliamentary Procedure teams in the Southern regions" (Personal Interview, Anna Bates, Nov. 2019). The purpose of this Parliamentary Procedure workshop is to provide Parliamentary Procedure teams, especially in the Southern regions, with crucial tools to practice and prepare themselves for the contests in order for them to increase their competitive appeal and be able to compete at a higher level with confidence.

Background

Leadership and Career Development Events (LDE's & CDE's) have been a widespread facet of the FFA for decades, and their goal is to "provide a direct extension of the classroom and laboratory by allowing students to apply their knowledge in a competitive environment and acquire valuable career readiness and life skills" (Lundry, J., et al., 2015). The National Research Council's report in 1988 found that a shift in agricultural education was crucial to allow students in the program to experience a more broad view of the industry "including career opportunities in sophisticated biological, mechanical, and electronic technologies, as well as prepare students for higher education" (Lundry, J., et al., 2015). In addition, LDE's and CDE's challenge students to use skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making, which are desired by employers, and help students to be more informed of career opportunities in agriculture and make appropriate career selections based on their skill set (Lundry, J., et al., 2015). Today, there are 19 CDE's and 7 LDE's that students can compete in at a national level, and there are 34 CDE's and 7 LDE's in the California FFA Association alone (FFA.org, Calaged.org).

Parliamentary Procedure in agricultural education dates back to before the Future Farmers of America organization was founded. In 1906, Parliamentary Procedure was first taught to agricultural education students at the New York School of Agriculture located at the St. Lawrence University at Canton (Connors, J. 2004). Parliamentary Procedure had a vital role when the FFA organization was founded in 1928 at the first National Agricultural Education Congress in Kansas City, Missouri where delegates attending the conference made decisions that would forever affect the future of agricultural education (Connors, J. 2004).

The purpose of the Parliamentary Procedure LDE is "to encourage students to learn to effectively participate in a business meeting and to assist in the development of their leadership

skills”, and the objectives include conducting an efficient meeting using the procedures, understanding parliamentary law, presenting a logical and convincing discussion, and recording minutes of the meeting (CATA Curricular Activities Code- Parliamentary Procedure and Debate, 2019). There are two levels of the competition, Novice (9th and 10th grade students) and Advanced (any grade), and each team consists of 6 members (CATA Curricular Activities Code- Parliamentary Procedure and Debate, 2019). The contest itself consists of a written exam on parliamentary law from *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, an oral demonstration round consisting of a main motion for discussion and 5 required motions (one for each participant), and oral questions asked by the judges at the end of the oral demonstration round. Each Parliamentary Procedure competition usually consists of three rounds, a preliminary, semifinal and final round, and the teams are judged based on the criteria in the Curricular Code defined by the California FFA Association (CATA Curricular Activities Code- Parliamentary Procedure and Debate, 2019). The competition consists of competitions at the chapter, sectional, regional, and state levels, and the team who wins in the state of California competes at the National Parliamentary Procedure competition at the National FFA Convention in October.

Methodology

When running this Parliamentary Procedure workshop event, the first aspect to consider is setting a date for the event. Career Development Event contests in California usually run from February to April, so it would be best to choose a weekend date in January or early February to give students and coaches time to incorporate information they have learned into their practices throughout the season. Anna Bates, the head of the San Luis Obispo FFA Department, shared that “the first few months of the year are pretty busy with invitational contests, so you should choose a date towards the beginning of the year so the workshop can be the most beneficial and you will have the best turnout” (Anna Bates, Personal Communication, Nov. 2019).

The next item to consider would be to finalize the curriculum and activities for the workshop in order to figure out what supplies would be needed. The Cognitive Dissonance theory will be implemented in these workshops by presenting information about Parliamentary Procedure to high school students in ways which they aren’t familiar with, and the second part of the theory says that people are likely to accept ideas that benefit them positively, which these workshops will. Workshop curriculum activities will include “Understanding Round Flow,” “How to Make Robert Your Friend,” and “Debate 101” (Workshop Event Plan Binder 2020). Specific instructions on these activities and workshop curriculums can be found in the workshop binder. The entire event should take place in 4 hours or less.

The workshop entitled “Understanding Round Flow” will focus on informing teams on motion logic, and where to place motions in a round. In this workshop, the following supplies will be needed: Laminated Round Cards (10-15), Classroom with white board, White Board Marker, Notebooks/Pens for students, Laminated Motion/ Definition Cards, and Motion Jeopardy PowerPoint. There are three activities for this workshop, and each will last for 15 minutes. The activities are motion definitions and placement, pillar motion discussion, and round applications (Workshop Event Plan Binder 2020).

In the workshop “How to Make Robert Your Friend” students will be shown how to navigate *Robert’s Rules of Order* and identify important parts in the text. The supplies needed include: Classroom with whiteboard/marker, an agriculture-related topic for students to discuss “around the horn” (i.e. Ag Incentive Grant, Discovery Program), and a main motion related to

“around the horn” discussion. This workshop has three activities: Part 1 is 15 minutes where students will discuss the topic sharing details and opinions, Part 2 is 10 minutes where the group openly discusses the topics from small groups, and Part 3 is 20 minutes where students are given a main motion relating to the discussed topic to come up with a well-structured debate (Workshop Event Plan Binder 2020).

Finally, the workshop entitled “Debate 101” will be focused on the basics of debating motions as well as how to take debate to the next level. The supplies needed include Robert’s Rules of Order (5-10 Copies), Oral Questions Packet (1 per team), Motion Review PowerPoint, and Student Notebook/paper with pens. The workshop has 3 activities: Part 1 is 15 minutes where the leader helps students navigate through *Robert’s Rules of Order*, Part 2 is 15 minutes where students examine oral questions and find them in the text, and Part 3 is 15 minutes where students play Motion Jeopardy (Workshop Event Plan Binder 2020).

The next logical step would be to promote the event and contact all the south coast FFA chapters with a Parliamentary Procedure team to get a headcount of all who will be attending. Anna Bates said, “There is not much involvement in the Parliamentary Procedure contest in the Southern regions, so you will need to widely promote the event for it to be successful” (Anna Bates, Communication, Nov. 2019). After an accurate headcount is obtained, the correct amount of supplies need to be gathered for the day of the workshop. A facility can be reserved on Cal Poly’s campus that will be appropriate for the number of students attending. One of Cal Poly’s many clubs or organizations should be contacted to work through for funding of supplies, possible food options that may be provided throughout the workshop and reserving a facility.

When the rest of the logistics have been sorted out volunteers with Parliamentary Procedure experience should be obtained to help host workshop activities, set up, and clean up the event. Finally, the workshop will be followed by a survey that students and coaches can fill out about their experience and ways to improve the workshop in the future. This survey should be filled out in the conclusion part of the event or in the last workshops the students attend.

Results

The result of this senior project is a detailed event plan to be used to execute the event in the 2020-2021 school year by other Cal Poly students. This detailed event plan includes the following sections: Cal Poly club sponsorship, securing Cal Poly facilities, event promotion, event registration tool, gathering volunteers, workshop curriculum and materials, and teacher and student feedback survey. This plan includes instructions on how to complete each of these tasks in a step by step manner to make the project successful. The authors provided sample promotion materials, a sample page on the Eventbrite registration tool, and a sample feedback survey.

Discussion & Conclusion

This project was developed and executed due to the lack of invitational Parliamentary Procedure competitions for coastal and southern FFA regions. There is a vast need for supplemental preparation for these regions with the Parliamentary Procedure contest to prepare these CDE teams for the State FFA Finals competition in April of each year in order to give these two regions an equal opportunity to succeed at the State FFA Finals competition and to allow these students to grown in their public speaking skills.

The event plan that is the result of this project will allow several Cal Poly students to host this competition year after year so Parliamentary Procedure teams in the coastal and southern regions can practice and grow their skills in this contest. The authors of this project evaluated the

contest and chose the most important aspects of the Parliamentary Procedure competition which can be difficult to teach students in creative ways, and these aspects of the contest were the subjects of the event plan. It was the goal of the authors to develop creative and innovative curriculums to teach the material of the Parliamentary Procedure contest to high school students in a way that is engaging and interactive. Another goal was to provide high school FFA teachers with new tools to teach the aspects of the Parliamentary Procedure competition to students after the workshop in order to better prepare them for the State FFA Finals competition. If this project was repeated, the authors would have communicated with more FFA chapters beforehand to receive feedback on specific topics they would like to see covered in the workshops. This would help the workshops to be more personalized to the needs of the regions that attend.

In closing, the authors learned how to create a detailed event plan and develop education curriculums for high school students that are inquiry and discussion based and are also delivered in an engaging format, therefore highlighting the standards that agricultural education operates on.

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