

Civil Dialogue

Teacher Power Point Notes

Context and Debates from the Utah Constitutional Convention addressing this essential question:

Why is civil dialogue essential to our self-government?

1787 Convention:

- This Convention allowed for an open and structured discussion based on rules that the Convention created together.
- The delegates were able to create the U.S. Constitution because they kept open minds and listened to each other, which helped them work together successfully.
- Delegates were open minded but also had many heated debates. They took positions on issues but also knew the importance of compromise.

Our Convention:

- The students become delegates and you, the teacher, are the chairperson. Students may have 10-20 seconds to speak, but if you go over, the chairperson may rule you out of order.
- The question for the class is “Is water wet?”

Utah Convention

- This Convention was structured and modelled after the 1787 Convention.
- Created its own rules for structured communication to discuss disagreements
- Suffrage was a major disagreement among delegates that was able to be worked out because of civil dialogue.

Points of Debate

- Roberts (Davis County) pro-suffrage in general, however, he opposed suffrage during the Convention because he felt if the Constitution were to include women’s right to suffrage, then it would be less likely to be accepted by Congress. Then Utah’s request for statehood would be denied again.

However, those he represented were for suffrage and very angry with his stance in Convention. In many situations he was the leader of those in the Convention that were against suffrage.

- Chidester (Garfield County) was for suffrage. He explains that he honestly supported the platform he was given, promised voters he would stand by it, and believes it would be wrong to change his position after being elected. He also defends the committee, saying both sides had a fair chance to speak and debate the issue, and that the minority knew they could share their views and write their own report.
- Murdock (Beaver County) believed Utah should be welcoming to everyone, including newcomers, and that the state would be better off with more smart and thoughtful people. He supports women's right to vote not just because he promised his voters, but because he believes it's the right thing to do. He also says women are well-informed and capable of teaching others about government.

Class Discussion

1. How did civil dialogue in the Utah suffrage debates lead to women getting the vote?
2. Why is civil dialogue essential for self-government?
3. Which civil dialogue skill do you think is the most important: open-mindedness, listening, advocacy, or collaboration? Why?
4. How can we encourage civil dialogue in our everyday lives?