

Rhode Island Model Legislature

Digital Plan: COVID-19

Nicholas R. Barrow, Systems Administrator

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Introduction

COVID-19 has brought about a unique challenge for a vast majority of the nation, and indeed globally, as educators, leaders, entrepreneurs, and families struggle to find a sense of normalcy in an entire unprecedented world.

The staff of the Rhode Island Council for the Social Studies, and its Program, the Rhode Island Model Legislature, are committed to continuing to provide the best legislature simulation we can possibly offer, whatever the circumstances may be.

Transitioning to an all-digital platform at the end of the 2019-2020 session has placed the Program in a unique position, being that we now have physical means of providing a digital program, mainly through Google's G-Suite for Nonprofits and the website, <https://www.rimodellegislature.com>.

The following guide will cover various aspects of the Program and how they will, if need be, transition to an all-digital platform.



Outline of the Traditional Process

For the purposes of explaining this plan, the following traditional Model Legislature program is outlined below into distinct steps that will be further expounded upon later in this document.

- > Students meet with their individual delegations
- > Students write legislation, jointly or separately, and then submit
- > Students participate on the leadership committee
- > Caucus meetings
- > Committee meetings
- > General Assembly

Club (“Delegation”) Meetings

Each delegation usually conducts meetings, from time to time, at the local level. This is where students discuss ideas, draft legislation, choose their state delegates (Senators and Representatives), and go through all of the submitted legislation.

Google Classroom

Every advisor has the capability to create a Google Classroom for their delegation and is instructed to do so. This can be done at the school level, being through accounts created and maintained by the local school district. However, for districts or schools that do not have Google G-Suite for Education, the Rhode Island Model Legislature offers Google Classroom as a provided service when subscribing to the program. This can be done by logging in with the school-name@rimodellegislature.com advisor accounts.

classroom.google.com

Google Meet

Every advisor also has the capability to hold virtual meetings with their entire delegation. On top of the tools provided through Google Classroom, Google Meet allows students and advisors alike to schedule virtual meetings with one another to plan their legislation, delegates they want to offer, and any other functions that would have been discussed in person.

meet.google.com

Students Authoring Legislation

The Program foresees little interruptions on the topic of authoring legislation, as, for the majority of participants, this is done individually.

Bills with One Author

Students can continue to author legislation however they please. The Program has created a video for a quick-start guide to authoring legislation using their @rimodellegislature.com email accounts for students that do not have access to Microsoft Word, Apple Pages, or other document processors at home. This video is available on the Rhode Island Model Legislature YouTube Channel, which can be found by going to rimodellegislature.com > Materials > YouTube Channel. Then, under the channel's Playlists > Digital Platform > Quick Start Guide to Authoring Legislation.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_mpfC_OhRU&list=PL_ROec3Bt7BArhfXIRB8SzaBJK3vtgZN4

Bills with More Than One Author

All bills must have a single primary author. That being said, some students partner together as co-authors to write more complex or like-minded legislation. As stated in the Program Handbook, the first author's name to appear on a bill is the author who will be listed on the website as the author.

If students still wish to author legislation with one another, they should be using Google Docs and their @rimodellegislature.com accounts to do so. Students can then schedule Google Meets with one another, using the same accounts, as well as utilizing the "Share" feature of Google Docs, to collaborate on every step of the bill writing process.

Advisor Review of Legislation

Advisors should review 100% of legislation authored by their students prior to submitting it. Policies governing legislation submission can be found in the Handbook, as well as on the Youtube channel. Google Meets can be utilized if advisors need to discuss them further.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A7NBZ8wqKs&list=PL_ROec3Bt7BBtEg_JQFZgFVTgCfwPwf_Q&index=2

Students & The Leadership Committee

The Leadership Committee is the group of students who serve as the committee chairs, party leaders, and chamber leaders who run the Program.

Tryouts/Interviews and Applications

Tryouts/Interviews for Model Legislature positions can occur exactly as they have before, but just in the form of a Google Meet. The application has been digitized, both in filling it out and with a YouTube video example of this. Google Meets will be used to meet with students and conduct the interviews digitally (more detailed information and procedures will be released closer to the fall).

Application: rimodellegislature.com > Materials > Forms & Materials > Form 106.

Tutorial:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlxFQBJBGek&list=PL_ROec3Bt7BA2EvoRpy7emXE1wvl4pv0S

Leadership Meetings

The Model Legislature is developing a wide variety of resources to help train the leadership students this year. The Program has already created a playlist on the YouTube channel specifically for leadership students. Administration is also developing a series of modules, in the form of Google Slides decks, to aid in the training process. The modules, as they become available, will be published to rimodellegislature.com > Materials > Modules. Lastly, Google Meets will be used from time to time to check-in with students and host portions of the meeting virtually, live.

Modules: <https://www.rimodellegislature.com/modules/>

Tutorials:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_ROec3Bt7BA2EvoRpy7emXE1wvl4pv0S

Caucus Meetings, Committee Meetings, and General Assembly

Program Administration intends to use Google Meets to host all the Caucus, Committee, and Chamber sessions over Google Meets. In addition, tools are being developed to allow for secure voting to take place in larger settings.

Caucus Meetings

Parties will develop their platforms at the Leadership Committee level as they always have. During the Caucus meetings, party leaders will speak on Google Meets and control the presentation as tradition holds. When it comes to the Caucus adopting the platform, a secure voting terminal will be employed. More information on this is to follow.

Committee Meetings

Committee Meetings will take place by voting in the video or chat sections of Google Meets. Since there will be very few members (± 10 students), it is easier to conduct “voice” votes or “hand” votes (students speaking their votes or raising their hands, respectively). In the worst case scenario, a “roll-call” vote can be used (the chair of the committee calls every member’s name and waits ± 10 seconds per member for them to respond with their vote). The relatively small size of committees allow for every chair to vote as according to tradition, but by “seeing” and “hearing” members over the Google Meets.

General Assembly Meetings

Due to the size of the members in each chamber, the General Assembly will see the most modifications when it comes to debating on bills, offering amendments, and making and hearing motions. As with Caucus Meetings, secure voting terminals are being created to allow students to vote on bills. A variety of tools are being considered to help control the flow of debate (ParlayIdeas, VoxVote, Zoom). More information will be released in the spring.

Resources

Below is a list of all resources the program has to offer.

Model Legislature Website

rimodellegislature.com | hosts a variety of materials we have created to aid in the new process.

Google Classroom

classroom.google.com | allows advisors to create virtual classrooms for their local clubs.

Google Meet

meet.google.com | virtual meetings for students and advisors.

Google Docs

docs.google.com | online document creating, editing, and collaborating.

YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjhnfLsB-dxgmTsKYC9qn8A> | tutorials on the entire process.