



citizens. not spectators.  
promoting youth civic and political engagement.



Center for Civic Education

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## **Citizens, Not Spectators**

### **Lesson 6: The Culminating Activity: In-Class Simulated Election**

#### **Lesson Overview**

In this lesson, students apply what they have learned about voting procedures and experience the processes similar to a real election polling site by role-playing poll workers with specific duties. Students become familiar with the polling site procedures and mechanics of voting in their state. Students cast their vote and assist others with voting in an environment that approximates an actual polling place. The lesson's election simulation coincides with the actual November general election for a more authentic experience. A supervisor, ideally the registrar of voters, should be in the vicinity of the voting booths to assist students who may have questions about the voting process and mechanisms.

#### **Suggested Grade Level**

Elementary (Grades 5–6)

#### **Estimated Time to Complete**

50 minutes

#### **Before the Lesson**

One week before the simulated election, check with the registrar's office about delivery of materials needed. You should request that voting booths and voting mechanisms be delivered to the school the day before or earlier if possible. Request a secure storage location with administrative approval and assure the registrar's office that equipment will be safely stored.

Also, students should present rationales for their new rules and vote on the proposed initiatives.

#### **Lesson Objectives**

After completing this lesson, students will be able to

- explain the requirements for a polling place,

- understand and explain their experiences as a voter and poll worker,
- understand and explain the necessity for the various roles and responsibilities of poll workers,
- understand and explain the need to keep the polling place apolitical,
- understand and explain the importance of voter registration lists, and
- understand and explain the voting mechanisms used.

## **Materials Needed**

### **Teacher Resources**

- Diagram of Polling Place (Teacher Resource 6)
  - The registrar of voters is the best source for proper polling place setup.
  - If a member of registrar of voters' office is unable to come to your classroom, refer to the following resource site for information about polling place setup. This is an example and can be altered to suit your needs.
- Who Does What and Where? (Teacher Resource 7)
- Registration Check-in for Students Without Identification Cards (Teacher Resource 8)

### **Polling Place Setup**

- Demonstration table: posters with students' initiatives for a new rule
- Voter registration lists (alphabetized class list)
- Ballots for voting, plus pencils if needed
- Voting mechanism, privacy booths, and/or ballot box
- "I Voted" stickers
- Vote tally sheet

## **Vocabulary**

- apolitical
- poll worker
- polling place
- registration list
- registrar of voters

## **Lesson Procedure**

### **1. Keeping the Polling Place Apolitical**

Explain to students that they have had the time to explain their initiative's rationale; however, once the simulated election polls open, there will be no discussion about the ballot initiatives. Explain that the class has had the opportunity to learn about the ballot initiatives in the days before the election. No pressure or persuasion on how to vote is allowed in the polling area. This includes any buttons, banners, posters, or similar items.

## 2. What Does an Election Polling Place Look Like?

Project Teacher Resource 6 on a screen or the classroom board.

- The diagram is one example of a polling place setup. The registrar of voters can provide the setup your state requires.
- Ask students their opinions of why the polls are set up like this.
  - Students may suggest maintaining order.
- Explain the reasons for the polling place setup.
  - Ensures legally registered voters
  - Avoids voting fraud such as duplicate voting

## 3. What Do Poll Workers Do?

Refer to Teacher Resources 6 and 7 for this section.

- Point out the setup and positions required for a polling place. Tell students that they will experience an abbreviated version of an actual election poll.
- Ask students if they think the poll workers' duties support the poll site setup goals.
- While projecting Teacher Resource 6 on a screen or the classroom board, write or draw in the polling place positions you will be using in the simulated election.
- Ask students if this setup will ensure a fair and accurate simulated election.
- Request student volunteers for the poll positions your simulated election will engage.
  - Explain that two students will be assigned to each position. This enables continued position coverage and the opportunity for each student to cast a vote.
- Student identification
  - If your school issues student identification cards, you should remind students to show them at the simulated election registration table.  
If a student does not have an identification card, have him or her sign in on a separate list (Teacher Resource 8).
- Class list
  - Your class list can be broken up by alphabet. This will allow several students to work at the registration table.
- Ballot distribution
  - A student stationed at the end of the registration table will hand out paper ballots to voters who have completed registration sign-in.

- Tallying the ballots
  - States use a variety of mechanisms for the completed ballot votes. Regardless of the procedure, monitors are needed at the site of a finalized ballot.
- First vote
  - In some elections, the first voter to complete a ballot is asked to check the ballot box. The box must be empty and then the registrar or you will seal the box.
- Computerized Mechanisms
  - One or two students will monitor the ballot entries.
- “I Voted” Stickers
  - Distribute a sticker to each voter who casts a ballot.

#### **4. Applying Knowledge and Skills: Casting a Vote in the Simulated Election**

- Each student will have the opportunity to cast his or her informed vote on the simulated election ballot.
- As poll workers, students will assist and guide other voters through the voting procedures.

#### **5. Tallying the Vote**

- If the registrar is present, he or she may tally the vote with the help of students, announce it to the class, and determine when and if the simulated election results will be announced publically.
- If older machines are used, students can tally the votes as the registrar reads the results from the back of the voting machine.

#### **6. Concluding the Lesson**

- Breaking down the polling area
  - Ask for volunteers to help you and the registrar with this task.
- Distribute the Citizens, Not Spectators survey and have students complete it.
  - The survey asks students not only to rate lessons and activities but also gives them the opportunity to answer questions about their experience and offer recommendations to make that experience better.
- If time is a factor, schedule 15 to 20 minutes of the next class meeting for completion of the survey.