Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 6: Culminating Activity: In-Class Simulated Election

Teacher Resource 7: Who Does What and Where?

There are a variety of poll positions that can accommodate more than one student as a poll worker. Each student should be assigned a poll worker position. All students need to know the responsibilities of at least one other position so substitutions can be readily made. The website for the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission at www.eac.gov has plenty of useful information about polling places and poll workers. In addition, the website has links to contact your state registrar’s offices, provides suggestions to accommodate disabled voters, and explains how to account for military and absentee ballots, among other helpful topics.

1. Polling Area Basic Setup: What Is Required and Why?

Distribute the diagram of the polling area (Teacher Resource 6). The best source is the registrar of voters. Each state has different requirements. If a staff person from the registrar’s office is unable to present to your class, refer to the following websites for necessary information:


- The Demonstration Area serves two purposes: orderly entry into the polling area; and a reference area where voters can review the ballot and ask any questions about the voting procedure.
- A monitored roped or taped-off line to the registration table directs and assures that voters sign in there. It also lessens the likelihood of voter fraud. Although many states do not so designate these areas, this is a school-simulated election with entire classes entering the polling area. Students who are voting might become impatient and try to bypass the registration table.
- A registration table with class lists and alphabetical breakdown signs. Another monitored line from the registration table assures privacy at the actual voting site.
  - If your school issues student identification cards, you should consider announcing the requirement to show them at the simulated election registration table.
- Privacy voting booths or voting machines
- Ballot box or computerized ballot scanner area
Explain and emphasize to students that the entire polling area must remain apolitical. No discussion of candidates or questions, party buttons, stickers, or the like are allowed within the polling area. Poll workers themselves must remain apolitical. Offices up for election can be identified but no candidate or party names should be mentioned.

2. Poll Workers and Their Responsibilities: Who Does what?

Explain to the students that they are assigned a poll position that must be filled at all times. When a poll worker is ready to vote, another student will temporarily fill in the position. Point out the following positions on the polling place diagram and explain each position’s duties.

- **Monitors for demonstration area**
  This is an area set aside from the polling area. One or two students will monitor the voting apparatus and ballot. Voters have the opportunity to examine the ballot prior to voting. Students assigned to this position can also explain the voting process being used in the simulated election. Monitors cannot mention candidate names, political parties, or explain ballot questions.

- **Monitors for designated waiting areas**
  One or two students will monitor the line of students waiting to register at the registration table.
  
  - A set of students must monitor this area to assure that all voters are signed in at the registration table. Only one voter per registration check-in poll worker should be standing at the registration table.
  
  - A second set of students will monitor checked-off voters to let them know when a privacy booth or voting machine is available. Tell students that this assures a voter’s privacy at a privacy booth or in a voting machine.

- **Registration table**
  Depending on the plan for the simulated election, three to six students can work with the class list(s) to check off registered voters. Break down the class list alphabetically and divide into three lines at the registration table so that several students can check in a class of voters simultaneously and keep a steady flow for registration.

  - Note: Class lists should be organized according to the schedule for classes to come to the polling area. The schedule is necessary for a smooth flow of voters through the polling area.

  - One student will work with a sign-in sheet (Teacher Resource 8) for those students without student identification cards.

- **Ballot distribution**
  When privacy booths are used, one or two students can distribute ballots to those who have been checked in at the registration table.

- **Voting apparatus**
  If privacy booths are used, voters will go directly to the privacy booth with no assistance from poll workers.
If older voting machines are used, station a student at each machine. The machine monitor will push the button that closes the curtains and clears the mechanism for a new vote. This poll worker must also keep the area around the voting machines clear. No voter should be waiting at the machine to vote.

- **Ballot finalization**
  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 should monitor the ballot entries.

- **Machine tally**
  If older voting machines are used, the voter’s choices are entered on the machine. The registrar of voters has the key to open the back of the machine. With the help of two students, the registrar usually reads off the numbers for each position on the ballot, and the students record the tally. The two student tally counts must match.

- **“I Voted” sticker distribution**
  When voters have completed the voting process, one or two students may distribute the stickers.