Lesson 4: 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 selected poll worker positions with specific duties. Students become familiar with the polling site procedures and mechanics of voting in their state. Students cast their vote in an environment that approximates an actual polling place. The lesson’s simulated election 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 mechanism.

Suggested Grade Level

High school (Grades 10–12)

Estimated Time to Complete

50 minutes

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 mechanism used.
Materials Needed

Teacher Resources

- Diagram of a Polling Area (Teacher Resource 9)
- Polling Site: Who Does What and Where (Teacher Resource 10)

Simulated Election Materials

- Demonstration table (Voter Information Guide and blank ballot)
- Voter registration list (alphabetized class list)
- Ballots for voting
- Pencils, if needed
- Voting mechanism, privacy booths, or ballot box
- “I Voted” stickers
- Vote tally sheet

Before the Lesson

Several days before the simulated election, you should check with the registrar’s office about delivery of materials needed (“I Voted” stickers, ballots, voting booths, tally sheet). 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 securely stored. Have students set up the polling area.

Lesson Procedure

1. Preparing to Open the Polling Site

Distribute Teacher Resource 9 to students, then project it on a screen or the classroom board and explain the basic setup of a polling site.

Refer to Teacher Resource 10: Poll Workers and Their Responsibilities: Who Does What? to briefly explain the duties of the poll workers at the various polling positions.

An in-class simulated election calls for a simple poll set up and, at minimum, two to three students checking off class names at the registration table. Depending on the size of your class you may want to add other polling positions such as a student at the end of the registration table who hands a ballot to a registered voter.

Describe the duties of the positions you want for your in-class simulation election and then ask for student volunteers for those positions.

- If your school has student identification cards, you should announce the requirement to show them at the simulated election registration table.
• Your class list can be broken up alphabetically. This will allow the registration table to accommodate several students at the registration table more efficiently.

• 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.
  o 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.
  o Computerized mechanisms: One to two students will monitor the ballot entries.
  o “I Voted” stickers: You can hand out one sticker per voter that has cast his or her ballot.

2. 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.

3. 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 whether and when 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.

4. Concluding the Lesson

• Breaking down the polling area
  o 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.