Lesson 5: The Culminating Activity: All-School 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 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

Lunchtime or the school day for an all-school simulated election

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 Polling Area (Teacher Resource 9)
- Polling Site: Who Does What and Where (Teacher Resource 10)
- Registration Check-in for Unassigned Voters (Teacher Resource 11)

Simulated Election Materials

- Ballots for voting and posting at the demonstration area and outside the polling area
- Voter Information Guides for the demonstration area
- Voter registration lists (alphabetized class lists)
- Schedule of times participating classes will arrive
- Sign-in sheet for students wishing to vote whose class is not scheduled to vote in the simulated election (Teacher Resource 11)
- Tables and chairs for the demonstration area and registration table
- Rope or tape for voter waiting lines at both ends of the registration table
- 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. 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. With the help of your students, set up the simulated election’s polling area before school begins.

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. You may want to make copies for the students’ reference.

Review and explain the poll worker position you will be using for your all-school simulated election.
• Finalize assignments for the poll worker duties.

• Have groups of workers talk with one another about how to split their duties.

• Make sure all the paperwork is ready—class lists, unregistered voter sign-in sheets, vote tally sheets, etc.

• Have poll workers review the paperwork they will be working with.

• The poll worker duty roster will be a helpful reference to have at the polling site.

• Students should gather the materials needed for their poll worker assignment, report to their assigned poll worker location, and prepare their area for the arrival of voters.
  o Demonstration monitors will post ballots outside the polling area and set out several Voter Information Guides.
  o Waiting line monitors will set up the roped or taped areas at both ends of the registration table. The roped or taped areas are set up to maintain order and avoid students from bypassing the registration table.
  o Registration table: Review the arrival times for participating classes with students assigned to the registration table. Have these students arrange class lists according to class arrival times. Post the schedule of class arrivals on the registration desk.  ▪ If your school has student identification cards, you should consider announcing the requirement to show them at the simulated election registration table.
  o A strong suggestion for an expected high polling place turnout is to break up the class lists alphabetically. This will allow the registration table to accommodate scheduled classes arriving at the registration table more efficiently.
  o For 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.
  o Line monitors will then direct students to an open voting booth.
  o If your simulated election uses older voting machines, students assigned to each machine should station themselves next to the machines. If the registrar approves, each student monitor should vote before the polls open. This allows the registrar and machine monitor to assure each machine is functioning properly.

• 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 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 If computerized mechanisms are used, one to two students will monitor the ballot entries.
  o After voters have cast their ballot, a student will give them an “I Voted” sticker.
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. Completing the Citizens, Not Spectators Student Survey

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.

- Making sure that all positions remain with working coverage, have students who have cast their vote, take time out to complete the student survey.
- Collect the surveys when completed.

4. Tallying the Vote

- If the registrar is present, he or she will tally the vote, 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.

5. Concluding the Lesson

- Ask for volunteers to help you and the registrar with breaking down the polling area.
- Be sure all students have completed the survey.
- If time has not allowed for completion, students can complete the survey at the beginning of the next class period.

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