Citizens, Not Spectators

Lesson 4: Polling Place and Poll Worker Positions

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students learn how to set up a polling place in a classroom or school hallway to accommodate “Election Day” voters. Students learn about poll worker positions and their responsibilities and are assigned roles at the polls. The polling place should approximate the setup of a real polling place as closely as possible. Ideally, the Registrar of Voters will accept your invitation to address the class about the polling place and poll worker responsibilities.

Suggested Grade Level

High school (Grades 10–12)

Estimated Time to Complete

50 minutes

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students should be able to

- explain the requirements for a voter polling place,
- understand and explain the various roles and responsibilities of poll workers,
- understand and explain the need to keep the voter polling place apolitical,
- understand and explain the importance of voter registration lists, and
- understand and explain the voting mechanism used.

Vocabulary

- apolitical
- poll worker
- polling place
- registration list
- voter registrar
Materials needed

**Teacher Resources**

- Diagram of polling area (Teacher Resource 10)
- Polling Site: Who Does What and Where? (Teacher Resource 11)
- Registration Check-in for Unassigned Voters (sign-in sheet for students not on a class list) (Teacher Resource 12)

**Other**

- Alphabetized class lists
- Supplies to make signs
- Ballots
- “I voted” stickers
- Tally sheet for votes

If your simulated election is planned for social studies classes or an all-school event, you will need alphabetized class lists and a sign-in sheet for additional students who want to vote.

**Before the Lesson**

A week or two prior to the simulated election, renew communication with the Registrars of Voters office. This communication is necessary to assure that required materials—election ballot or absentee ballot—will be available for this lesson. If a registrar office staff person is unable to present to your class, discuss the polling place setup for accuracy, and that the setup meets the approval of the registrar.

Depending on how extensively your plans are for the simulated election, alphabetized class lists from other participating classes should be delivered to you one week prior to “Election Day.”

**Lesson Procedure**

1. **Setting the Stage: What Does a Polling Place Look Like?**

If a member of the Voter Registrar’s Office is coming to do a presentation to the class, he or she will cover much of this information. Some students may have accompanied their parents at one time or another and have seen a polling place—it will be interesting to hear what they think.

If a member of the Voter Registrar’s Office is unable to come to your classroom, refer to Teacher Resource 10 for information about polling site setup. This diagram is an example and can be altered to suit your needs and chosen location; use written adjustments or tailored illustrations.

Distribute Teacher Resource 10 to students, then project it on a screen or the classroom board. Refer to Teacher Resource 11 to explain the basic setup of polling areas.
2. Who Are the Poll Workers? Positions and Responsibilities

Refer to Teacher Resource 11: Poll Workers and Their Responsibilities: Who Does What? Then for review, ask the students the following questions:

- Who works at the polls and what do they do?
- How does a person become a poll worker?
- Who is allowed in the polling place?
- Who is allowed near or around the polling place?
- How are votes tallied?
- How are the results communicated?

3. What Are My Duties?

- 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.
- Make all the necessary signs—Polling Place, Vote Here, Demonstration Area, Registration, alphabetical breakdown of last names (for example, A–M and N–Z), and Ballot Casting. Assign responsibility for posting the signs to student poll workers in the designated polling areas.

4. Concluding the Lesson: Preparations for the Big Day: Simulated Election

Remind students of the date and times of Election Day, and to arrive early to help set up the polling place. Have the polling area diagram available (Teacher Resource 10), with written adjustments or illustrations included to guide arrangements at your chosen voting location.