

MITCH BEATY
UT EXTENSION

Electoral College Lesson Plan “Electing a President”

DESCRIPTION

Designed for 5th-8th Graders. This is an interactive lesson which allows students to learn more about the electoral college and have a greater understanding of how a president is elected by actually participating in the election process.

OBJECTIVES

To help students to better understand the presidential election process.

TIME REQUIRED TO DELIVER LESSON

One class period of 45-55 minutes but could be simplified or expanded depending upon time. It will take a minimum of 40-45 minutes to do the election aspect of the lesson.

BODY OF LESSON

1. Handout all Electoral College Fact Pieces as well as the Issue Pieces, there should be 8 pieces.

2. Say:

- Today we are going to look at how we elect a president in our country.
- Article II of our constitution set up a very specific way that our president is elected.
- It is very unique from the way we elect any of our other legislators. They are elected by popular vote. For example, the candidate who gets the most votes wins.
- The President however is elected through a process known as the Electoral College.”

3. Say:

- “Let’s look at the Electoral College. (Refer to the panel with the map)
- Before we get into the president let’s refresh on how we elect our Congressmen and Senators from each state. Does anyone know how many US Senators each state has? There are 2.
- Does anyone know how they are elected? They are elected by popular vote by the people from their state every 6 years. They represent the entire state.
- What about our Congressman, does anyone know who they represent? They actually represent about 650,000 people in a specific area or district of a state.
- How are they elected? They are Elected by Popular vote by the people of their District every two years.
- There are several differences in a Senator and a Congressman... but one is that the Congressman is more specific in who they represent. For example some Congressional districts are all city, while some are all country or rural, and some are a combination of the two. A Senator represents everyone in the state.. the city, the country, everything. So a Senator has to understand a lot of different problems from many different parts of the state whereas a Congressman can be very focused on the problems in just his or her area.”

4. Say:

- The framers of our Constitution were real concerned about a president being elected by a certain state simply because they had more people than anyone else.
- It would be similar to electing a student body president at school where every class had a candidate. The largest class would win and that candidate would obviously make decisions to help his or her class

5. Say:

- That’s why they chose the Electoral College. To make sure all areas of the country had at least some say in who became president and the president would then represent the issues of a majority of people.
- If you look at the map you will notice that each state has a number listed under it. That is its allotment of electoral votes.
- Does anyone know how a state’s electoral votes are determined? Who has that piece...please read (Each State has Electoral Votes equal to the number of US Reps and Senators.. have them bring up and stick to board).
- Does anyone know how many Electoral Votes Tennessee has? 11
- How many total Electoral Votes are there? Who has that Piece ? (Have them bring it up) 538
- Does anyone know how a candidate gets Electoral Votes? Who has that Piece? (Have them read and come to the board) [The candidate winning the popular vote in a state also wins the Electoral Votes]
- Does anyone know how many Electoral Votes it takes to be elected President? Who has that Piece? (Have them read and come to the board) [270]. When a president gets 270 or more votes they are said to go “over the top.”
- What happens if one candidate gets the most popular votes while another gets the most electoral votes? The candidate with the most electoral votes wins.
- If you watch election coverage on election day you may notice that each state will be shaded with a different color depending upon who wins the state.

6. Say:

- Let's look at the bottom panel for a second
- Does anyone know what issues are? That's right an issue is an idea open for debate. You know how people say there are always two sides to every story or argument? Well it's the same with issues.
- People vote for a candidate based on his or her stand on issues.
- For example an issue here at school might be activity to do at recess or PE. You may be given a choice between softball and kickball. Each of you may have an opinion on which you would rather do. If given a chance to vote... some of you would vote one way, some would vote another way, and some may not have a very strong opinion and wouldn't vote at all.
- It's the same way with political issues. People have opinions based on where they live, what they do for a living, their age, their religious beliefs and so on.
- Let's look at some of these issues. Issues that relate to Aid to underdeveloped countries, Import/Export Tariffs, Involvement in Foreign Wars and United Nations might fall into what category of issues? Issues related to Foreign Policy (bring that piece Up)..
- Issues that relate to Religion, Speech, Press Freedoms, obscene language from public, burning the American Flag for example would fall into what category? Social (bring that piece up)
- Issues that relate to Taxes, Welfare, Unemployment, Social Security, Interest Rates, Government Spending, for example would fall into what category? Economic (bring that piece up)
- Issues that relate to Medical and Medicine/Prescription Drug Cost, Health Insurance, Smoking Restrictions, would fall into what category? Health Care (bring that Piece Up)
- There are a lot more issues we could discuss such as education, crime, the environment but this gives us a basis for our next activity electing a president.

7. Divide the class into 5 groups: Any Easy Way to do this would be to count out the first three as group 1, the next three as group 2, the next four as group 3, the next 4 as group 4 and everyone else as group 5.

Find a place in the room for each group to congregate and give group the state piece for their state as follows:

Group 1	Colorado
Group 2	Oklahoma
Group 3	Missouri
Group 4	Wisconsin
Group 5	Illinois

Also secure a place on the class' white board or do a laminated flip chart which you can do dry erase markers on and put a diagram like this

270 Needed to Win			
Total	Jackson	Grant	Total
239			239
—	CO. (8)		—
—	OK. (8)		—
—	MO. (11)		—
—	WI. (11)		—
—	IL. (22)		—

8. Say:

- Here is the situation: It is Election Day and we are electing a president. Here are the two Candidates (Introduce each candidate who they are and where they are from).
- All the electoral votes have be counted except the ones from your states. Right now it is tied with a total of 239 votes each. The candidate receiving 270 votes will win and become the next president.
- Here also is a list of issues for each candidate (Read issue sheet and post under the candidate).
- Please make up your mind as to how you will vote based on these issues.
- Normally in a presidential election we would vote secret ballot but in the essence of time you will just need to raise your hand.
- Lets start with the "Great State of Colorado" who votes for Jackson who votes for Grant {Count votes declare a winner and add those electoral votes on the board keeping a running tally. (For example if Jackson wins Colorado, then put 247 in the blank out beside his name and 239 out beside Grant's this gives the up-to-date electoral count)}
- (Go through each state from Colorado thru Illinois).
- (If there is a tie in a state then flip a coin to determine the winner. Explain sometimes the votes can be very close in each state)

- When a candidate reaches the 270 mark declare that we have a new president because that state has pushed him "over the top." Continue to go through the other states to get the final tally.
- In case of a tie at 269 to 269 the constitution states that the House of Representatives will elect the president with each state having one vote. In other words all 9 of Tennessee's Congressman would be polled with the winner getting the vote from that state. (In case of a tie here... do the same consider each group as the delegation of Congressman from each state... and they need to vote with the winner receiving the "vote" from each state. The candidate which gets the majority or in this case 3 of the 5 votes will be declared the winner.

9. Say: Hopefully this gives you a better understanding on the Election Process. To help you remember some of the information we went over today please complete the crossword puzzle on the back of the handout.

Sample Issues which can be used.

5 th Grade		
Issues	John F. Jackson	Gerald R. Grant
Foreign	Likes French Fries	Likes Tater Tots
Social	Likes Basketball at Recreation Time	Likes Kickball at Recreation Time
Economics	Is For Parents giving Allowances	Against Parents Giving Allowance
Health Care	Against Schools Administering free Medicines	For Schools Administering Medicines

6 th Grade		
Issues	John F. Jackson	Gerald R. Grant
Foreign	Against Trading with other Countries (Could Lose cars, technology, and fruits)	For Trading with other Counties (Could Lose jobs related to cars, technology, and fruits)
Social	For Field Trips	Against Field Trips
Economics	Increase Tax on Clothes, Music, and Food	Decrease Tax on Clothes, Music, and Food
Health Care	For Ice Cream and Sodas at Lunch	Against Ice Cream and Sodas at Lunch

7th Grade		
Issues	John F. Jackson	Gerald R. Grant
Foreign	Increase security on our borders	Wants security on our borders to stay the same
Social	Against School Uniforms	For School Uniforms
Economics	Must be at least 18 years old to have a job.	Must be at least 16 to have a job.
Health Care	Mandatory bed time of 10 p.m. for everyone under 15	Recommendations early bedtime, but does not want to make it mandatory.

8th Grade		
Issues	John F. Jackson	Gerald R. Grant
Foreign	Feels we should pull out of the war going on over seas.	Feels we should stay in the war overseas.
Social	For starting Draft for 18 and over	Against a draft
Economics	For a lower Income Tax rate	For a Higher Income Tax Rate
Health Care	Increase Funding for Cancer Research	Increase Funding for research on Non-Cancer Diseases

Issues	Examples of Issues
Foreign	Aid to underdeveloped countries, Import/Export Tariffs, Involvement in Foreign Wars and United Nations,
Social	Religion, Speech, Press Freedoms, obscene language from public, burning the American Flag,
Economics	Taxes, Welfare, Unemployment, Social Security, Interest Rates, Government Spending,
Health Care	Medical and Medicine/Prescription Drug Cost, Health Insurance, Smoking Restrictions,