



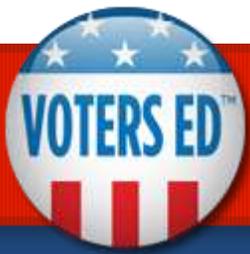
Upper Elementary Lesson

The Electoral College



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Upper Elementary Lesson

The Electoral College

Target Grade Levels:

Elementary (5-6)

Lesson Length:

Approximately 45 minutes

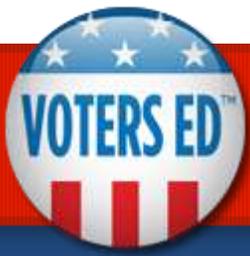
This lesson is correlated with state and NCSS standards. Please reference the Standards Master Correlation document for a more detailed and comprehensive description of all correlated standards.

State Standards

- California
 - Goal of Democratic Understanding and Civic Values
 - Constitutional Heritage
 - Civic Values, Rights, and Responsibilities
 - Goal of Skills Attainment and Social Participation
 - Participation Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
- Florida
 - Civics and Government Strand
 - Elementary Standard 3, SS.5.C.3.2
 - Geography Strand
 - Elementary Standard 4, SS.5.G.4.1
 - Elementary Standard 4, SS.5.G.4.2
- Massachusetts
 - History and Geography
 - Concept and Skill 6
 - Civics and Government
 - Concept and Skill 8
- New York
 - Standard 5
 - Key Idea 2
 - Key Idea 3
 - Key Idea 4
- Texas
 - Grade 5, Social Studies Skills, Standard 24

NCSS

- Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices



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Objective

The objective of this lesson is to introduce students to key concepts related to the Electoral College and presidential elections.

By the end of this lesson:

- Students will be able to describe the Electoral College, and how it is used in United States elections.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the popular vote and the electoral vote.
- Students will be able to explore the benefits and drawbacks of both popular vote systems and the electoral vote system.

Prior Knowledge

This lesson assumes that students possess some prior knowledge of civics concepts, including branches of government and the Constitution. However, it does not assume any previous knowledge of the Electoral College as an institution.

Differentiation Strategies

- Group/team work
- Guided questions
- Smartboard/computer/tablet presentation

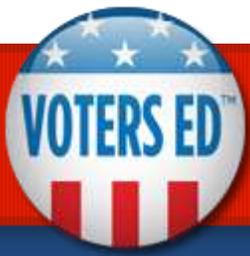
Materials

- Paper and pencils for each student
- Ballot sheets (half sheets of paper)
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or Smartboard
- Voter's Ed application

Procedure

Anticipatory Set (Warm-up):

Ask students to define the word vote. Once the class agrees on a definition, ask students to provide examples of voting that they have experienced. Point out that people do not actually directly vote for the President of the United States.



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Open the Voters Ed application on the Smartboard or student tablets and click on the interactive map. Demonstrate the difference between the popular vote and the electoral vote using the interactive map.

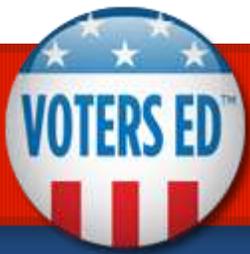
Ask students to discuss their understanding of this difference with a partner, and then ask a few pairs to share their ideas with the class. Using the interactive map, encourage students to explore how changing a state's vote changes the Electoral College totals. Encourage students to write down any questions they may have prior to starting the main lesson.

Introduction:

Discuss how citizens vote for candidates who govern the country, which includes members of Congress. You may need to remind students that Congress writes the laws of the country, and the President enforces those laws and defends the country.

Guided Practice:

1. To simulate a popular election, randomly select two students to serve as "candidates" running for school president. Assign one candidate as Red and one as Blue. Ask each candidate to say a few sentences about what they would do if they were elected as president. Then hold a mock vote, with each student writing the name of his or her chosen candidate on the half-sheet "ballot." Select two students to serve as the official vote counters. Ask each student to count the votes and announce the winner. Discuss how each person in the class had a single vote, and this system is called a popular election.
2. Now, to simulate an election with electoral votes, ask students to imagine that four years have passed and it is time to elect a new school president. Ask two new students to serve as candidates, and to also speak briefly about what they would do if elected. Arrange the rest of the students in to different-sized groups (we suggest one small, two medium, and one large group). Explain that each group is now a state, and each state has a different number of votes depending upon the size of the group.



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On the Smartboard or whiteboard, write:

Small state = 3 electoral votes

Medium states = 7 electoral votes

Large state = 20 electoral votes

Explain that in the real Presidential election, each state votes on its own (a popular election). Once that candidate is chosen by the state, the state gives ALL of its electoral votes to that candidate.

Ask each "state" to vote for a candidate using a popular vote (one vote per person), and then write their vote on a blank ballot. Ask students to work as a class to tally up the electoral votes for each candidate.

If time: ask students to determine whether it is possible for a candidate to win a popular vote but not the electoral vote.

Closure:

End the lesson with an open-ended discussion of several key questions, such as:

- Which election method is most fair? Why do you think so?
- How did it feel to be in a state with a large number of electoral votes? A medium number? A small number?
- Why do you think we use the electoral vote system in the United States?

Formative Assessment

Ask students to explore the results of past elections, and challenge students to find examples of elections when a candidate received the greatest number of electoral votes, but lost the popular vote (this happened in 1824, 1876, 1888, and in 2000). You may also invite students to briefly write how they think people in the country may have reacted when this happened, and whether they believe the electoral voting system is the best solution to elections.