Does Every Vote Count?

Student Material

Nothing is more unreliable than the populace, nothing more obscure than human intentions, nothing more deceptive than the whole electoral system. — Marcus Tullius Cicero



Thousands of years ago, Greek politicians and philosophers debated the ability of the populace to make an informed decision about the election of a leader. Over 200 years ago, one of the most contentious disputes between delegates at the Constitutional Convention was over the way a president of the United States of America would be elected. Some argued that each eligible citizen should have the opportunity to voice a choice in the country's leader. Others claimed that such a system, also known as direct voting, would incite *mob rule*. There was fear that direct elections would lead to public riots and politicians breaking laws to secure votes from the citizenry. Further, it was thought that an Electoral College, or a system where a small, well-informed group would select a president, would prevent manipulation of the general populace.

Consider opposing views evidenced by quotes from our Founding Fathers:

"I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves. If we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education." — Thomas Jefferson

"Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself." — John Adams

"Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote." — Benjamin Franklin

The debate continues to rage today. As recently as the 2016 presidential election, politicians contested election results with claims that the popular vote for a particular candidate was larger than the opponent's, yet the opponent won the election *solely* based on the Electoral College. When coupled with technology's impact on American citizens' voices, might it be time to amend our electoral process?

Unlike the politicians and philosophers who debated this issue hundreds or even thousands of years ago, today's researchers have data. You will work to convince a national legislator whether the Electoral College or popular vote should determine the presidency.

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Does Every Vote Count? *Rubric*

Student Material

	Novice	*Apprentice*	*Practitioner*	*Expert*
Historical Views on the Electoral Process	• defines popular (direct) vote and Electoral College • develops 3–4 research questions about the creation of the Electoral College • notes answers to research questions with information from book and web resources	• describes differences between Electoral College and popular (direct) vote • develops 3–4 research questions that address pro and con arguments for the Electoral College • describes the Constitutional Convention compromise that lead to the Electoral College • shares information about elections where there was discrepancy between the popular (direct) and Electoral College vote • questions answered using book and web sources	explains: • history behind argument for popular (direct) vote • history behind argument for Electoral College • relevant claims from delegates at the Constitutional Convention • compromise that lead to America's use of the Electoral College • consequences of compromise to Electoral College • analysis of all historical presidential elections where a discrepancy existed between the Electoral College and popular (direct) vote • utilizes a balance of sources including primary and secondary from book, web, and/audio format	all of *Practitioner* plus: includes analysis of quotes and sources from ancient Greece
Data Collection	collects data to show popular vote and Electoral College vote data in presidential elections from the 1800s to present	displays data in chart form to share popular vote and Electoral College vote data in presidential elections from the 1800s to present	culls data from primary sources to illustrate: • percentage of eligible voter turnout for presidential elections from the 1800s to the present • a double bar graph to represent popular vote and Electoral College vote statistics for presidential elections from the 1800s to the present • chart that shares changes in number of Electoral College votes for each state for presidential elections from the 1800s to the present	all of *Practitioner* plus: includes data from the 1700s and provides a demographic breakdown of statistics for 1976 to present
Data Analysis	reports difference between popular vote and Electoral College vote for presidential elections from the 1800s to the present	reports trends/similarities between popular vote and Electoral College vote for presidential elections from the 1800s to the present	• creates an equation that *most closely* represents the proportional relationship between the Electoral College and the popular vote for presidential elections • uses data to draw inferences about the population of three different decades within: ○ 1800–1899 ○ 1900–1950 ○ 1950 to present • approximates the probability of the percentage of future presidents who will win the Electoral College vote but not the popular (direct) vote • creates a digital interactive graphic (infographic) to explain the critical findings	all of *Practitioner* plus: • predicts future trends of popular vote and Electoral College vote • takes a representative survey of a particular demographic to determine how much support people have for the Electoral College versus popular vote for presidential elections

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Argument Content	• written to a national leader • states position supporting a specific presidential election model • supports claim with facts and statistics from books, web, and/or periodicals • statistics, examples and/or anecdotes from research support claim • has an opening and closing	• written to a national leader • states position supporting a specific presidential election model • supports claim with facts and statistics from primary and secondary sources • employs a compelling opening • closing inspires the reader to action • includes statistics, definitions, examples, and anecdotes that directly support claim	• written to a national leader directly charged with amending Article II of the Constitution • provides position supporting a specific presidential election model • expands on claim with supports from primary sources including statistics, news reports, essays, laws, court cases, and/or and digital media • supporting paragraphs address potential counterclaims • makes recommendations for future presidential elections • describes the consequences of the argument • employs a compelling opening that sets foundation for claim • closing inspires the reader to action	all of *Practitioner* plus: • employs justification from social media, literature, or film • includes a position on the use of social media and/or the internet on voting • includes a critique of ancient philosophies regarding elections • opening and closing connect to create a cohesive whole

Argument Craft	• graphic organizer is used to plan position essay
	• paragraphs begin with a topic sentence that includes a transitional word
	• paragraphs are written with simple, compound, and compound-complex sentences
	• a thesaurus is used to find alternatives for overused words
	• spelling, capitalization, and end punctuation rules are followed
	• sources are cited
		• graphic organizer is used to plan the introduction, body, and conclusion of position essay
		• paragraphs begin with an idea-based topic sentence and include transitional words
		• paragraphs are written with varied sentence structure and include transitional words to connect ideas
		• sophisticated vocabulary is used to hook the reader
		• spelling, capitalization, and punctuation rules are followed
		• sources are appropriately cited at the end of the proposal
			• draft of essay shows clear connections to pre-writing organizer
			• paragraphs begin with an idea-based topic sentence
			• paragraphs include varied sentence structure
			• sophisticated vocabulary is used to hook reader
			• rhetorical devices add tone and voice to the position through the use of:
			  ○ idiom
			  ○ allusion
			  ○ simile
			  ○ metaphor
			• transitional words are included in appositive and/or subordinate clauses
			• transitional phrases and clauses link ideas within and between paragraphs
			• follows spelling, grammar, and syntax rules
			• sources are appropriately cited within and at the end of the proposal
				all of *Practitioner* plus:
				• utilizes extended metaphor in position essay
				• includes nonfiction text supports to deepen reader's understanding of claim
				• hyperlinks to virtual source(s)
				• shows evidence of revision process

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Does Every Vote Count? *Scaffold for Learning* Teacher Material



Benchmark Video and Discussions

- Unit launch — Votes Matter! — to create a felt need
- The Constitutional Convention
- Amending the Constitution
- The stories data tells
- Outliers
- Political propaganda
- Gerrymandering

Instructional Activities: Learning

Instructional Texts/Websites

- Citing sources
- Rhetorical devices (IV)
- Recognizing outliers in data sets
- Writing with tone (I)
- Varying sentence structure
- Statistical analysis (I, P)
- Claim writing
- Data collection/interpretation (I, P)
- Equation writing (I, P)
- Research writing (I)

Instructional Videos

- Citing sources
- Rhetorical devices (IV)
- Recognizing outliers in data sets
- Writing with tone (I)
- Varying sentence structure
- Statistical analysis (I, P)
- Claim writing
- Data collection/interpretation (I, P)
- Equation writing (I, P)
- Research writing (I)

How-to Sheets

- Develop a claim
- Organize a position essay
- Add 270 Electoral College votes
- Organizing text
- Setting up a proportional relationship

Interactive Websites

- Data analysis skills practice (HW)
- Probability practice
- Candidate campaign websites
- Citation builder (I, HW)

Learning Centers

- The Electoral College (I, P)
- Interpreting data (I, P)
- Recognizing normal distribution and outliers (I, P)
- Political propaganda (P)
- Rhetorical devices (I, P, SG)
- Gerrymandering (SG)

Small-Group Mini-Lessons

- Citing sources
- Rhetorical devices
- Recognizing outliers in data sets
- Writing with tone
- Varying sentence structure
- Statistical analysis
- Claim writing
- Data collection/interpretation
- Equation writing
- Research writing

Instructional Activities: Additional

Practice

- **Stat + data analysis/interpretation (I)**
- **Equation writing (I)**
- **Claim writing**
- **Locating national leaders (I, P)**
- **Creating graphic representations of data**
- **Citation building (I)**
- **Supporting claims with data (IV)**

Application

- **Research addresses for national leaders**
- **Complete data tables/bar graphs (I, P)**
- **Organize research (I, P)**
- **Write equations to rep prop relations.**
- **Correlation vs. causation (IV)**
- **Offer argument letter as mentor text**

Assessment

- **Peer assessing statistical analyses (P)**
- **Peer editing argument letters (P)**
- **Use rubric to peer edit task (P)**
- **Self-assess equation writing (I)**
- **Use rubric to self-assess task (I)**

Reflection (I)

In your *Efficacy Notebook*, reflect:

- **What surprised you about our voting proc.?**
- **Are all people represented in this process?**
- **How are things same/diff. from 200 yrs ago?**
- **What did you like/could be improved?**

Key: Individual **(I)**, Pairs **(P)**, Small Groups **(SG)**, Activities suitable for Homework **(HW)**, Insights Video **(IV)**

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Does Every Vote Count? *Facilitation Grid*

Teacher Material

	Social Studies			Math					ELA								
Student	Explains the differences between popular (direct) vote and Electoral College	Finds voter data sets with normal distributions	Predicts future events based on trends in data	Analyzes data for measures of central tendency	Explains proportional relationship	Calculates probability in percentages	Interprets statistics to describe trends	Identifies outliers in a data set	Paraphrases information and organizes by topic	Writes compelling claim/position statement	Uses research to develop a claim	Organizes text to relay logical messages	Addresses potential counterclaims/arguments in writing	Uses transitional words fluidly between ideas	Varies sentence structure	Cites sources appropriately	Cites primary and secondary sources

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Does Every Vote Count? *Facilitation Questions*

Teacher Material

COMPREHENSION: *Ask questions that ensure students understand content and skills needed to solve the problem*	• What is meant by the term *outliers*? • What do statisticians mean when they talk about normal distribution? • What is the Electoral College? • What is the process by which the Constitution can be amended?
APPLICATION: *Ask questions that ensure the ability of students to apply learning to new situations.*	• Where are the outliers in this voter data set? • What is the normal distribution of this voter data set? • How do you think a change to our voting procedure might impact future elections? • How might a different voting procedure have affected the _____ election? *(Choose any contested election.)* • How is the Preamble to our Constitution central to the American democracy?
CONNECTION: *Ask questions that ensure the ability of students to apply learning to their lives.*	• How would an Electoral College system impact our school-based elections? • Based on voter data sets, what do you believe is the probability that your vote will count? • How would you like to participate in our representative government? • Where in your life do you believe you have a voice in change? • Where in your life do you believe that your voice is not heard or does not matter?
SYNTHESIS: *Ask questions that encourage students to create new information from existing data*	• Do your data sets conform to normal distribution? • Does statistical analysis of past elections show evidence of voter fraud? • What sort of voter data set might be collected if presidential election votes could be cast on the internet? • What ideas might you suggest to increase the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots? • If asked by a peer from another nation to defend our electoral system, how would you respond?
METACOGNITION: *Ask questions that prompt students to think about their own thinking process.*	• What was the most significant piece of statistical evidence that led you to your claim? • Do you believe your argument will compel a national leader to take you point of view? Why or why not? • How did an understanding of statistical concepts affect your ability to prove your claim? • Do you feel empowered by this task? Why or why not?

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Does Every Vote Count? *Transfer Task* Student Material

What if our principal was considering changing our school presidential elections? Should we have an electoral vote for each grade? Or should we keep it so the popular vote wins? Write a persuasive letter to the principal advocating for either the implementation of an electoral vote and why that would be more fair or share why we should keep school elections as a popular-vote process.

School information:
Freshman class 125 students
Sophomore class 145 students
Junior class 136 students
Senior class 115 students

Be sure to include the following:

- A double bar graph to represent popular vote and Electoral College vote statistics for our school
- An equation that represents the proportional relationship between the Electoral College and the popular vote for school president
- A position supporting a specific presidential election model
- A claim with supports from primary sources
- Supporting paragraphs that address potential counterclaims
- Consequences of the argument
- Recommendations for future presidential school elections
- A compelling opening that sets the foundation for the claim
- An inspiring closing
- Paragraphs begin with an idea-based topic sentence
- Paragraphs include varied sentence structure
- Sophisticated vocabulary to hook the reader
- Rhetorical devices through the use of:
  - Idiom
  - Allusion
  - Simile
  - Metaphor
- Transitional phrases and clauses link ideas within and between paragraphs
- Spelling, grammar, and syntax rules are applied

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Unit Overview

Does every vote count? This unit capitalizes on burgeoning voters' felt need to understand the presidential process and their civic duty to make informed decisions about the United States of America as it forms "a more perfect union." Through the unit, learners will think like politicians and philosophers, analyze statistical data from past presidential elections, and write an argumentative letter to a national leader involved in the country's electoral process.

Enduring Understandings	Essential Questions
• The Constitution of the United States of America is a living document. • Compelling arguments are supported by statistical, anecdotal, and historical evidence. • Statistical data can be analyzed and interpreted to make correlations. • Intellectual integrity adds to a writer's credibility.	• What can data tell us about a population? • How is data used as a catalyst for change? • How do governments respond to the will of the people? • How do writers convince readers to take on their point of view? • What criteria define a compelling source?

Common Core State Standards Addressed

ELA

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.5
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9

Math

HSS-ID.A.1, HSS-ID.A.2,
HSS-ID.A.4, HSS-ID.B.5,
HSS-ID.B.6c, HSS-IC.A.1,
HSS-IC.B.6, HSS-MD.B.6

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Other National Standards Addressed	
Social Studies: http://www.educationworld.com/standards/national/soc_sci/index.shtml	
21st Century Skills Addressed	
Core Content and Interdisciplinary Themes • Subject-Area Mastery	*Information and Media Literacy* • Information Literacy • Media Literacy • Information and Communication Technology
Learning and Innovation • Critical Thinking and Problem Solving • Creativity and Innovation • Communication and Collaboration	*Life and Career* • Flexibility and Adaptability • Initiative and Self-Direction • Social and Cross-Cultural Skills • Productivity and Accountability • Leadership and Responsibility

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