

Growing Voters and Election 2008

Activity Title: **Students Conduct Own Survey** **Students Design, Create and Analyze results of their own poll**

Overview

The Presidential campaign is full of constant reports about public opinion towards the candidates and attitudes on the issues. These are mostly based on results of national polls conducted by a variety of sources for various purposes. In this activity students will get behind the national statistics and see how data on public opinion is generated. By designing their own poll, students will see the importance of what questions are asked and how they are asked, what data is collected and how it is analyzed. As students analyze and present their own data, they understand the wider role of public opinion in the Presidential election process.

Activity

Divide the class into teams or groups for design, creation, distribution, and analysis.

The **Design group** should circulate its proposed questions for brainstorming (or the class could first brainstorm and the Design group then finalize).

The **Creation group** should go online (i.e. to Zoomerang.com) to produce the online survey itself

The **Distribution group** must organize to get the link sent out to students to answer it. (Consider the authorized use of Facebook pages to send out survey link.)

The **Analysis group** will work to report out the results of the survey.

This poll will be conducted online and the results will be shown in real time.

I. The Design Group leads the process of forming the survey questions; students and teachers will collaborate in the initial development stage.

There are many different question types that can be used in the survey: multiple choice, one answer and open-ended questions. There are free websites that will host a survey, for example **Zoomerang.com** which keeps a free survey up on the internet to use for 10 days. (Note the timing issue of when desirable for students to take the survey and get the results before the survey expires.)

Let the students brainstorm and develop their survey questions. Have a discussion about how to pose questions and the different answers a question can generate.

Some suggestions for inclusion in the poll:

Who do you want to see win the election for President and Vice President?

What information helped you to decide to vote for your candidate?

What major changes will a President John McCain or Barak Obama make in the next year?

What do you like most about candidate ___?

What do you dislike most about candidate ____?

Discussion can also include why other types of questions are included in polls and find whether students would like to select for more data to bring into their analysis. This will also involve the Distribution and Analysis groups.

For example,

*demographic questions:

- Grade level and age of respondent
- Gender
- State and/or district
- Ethnic and racial background

*Probing questions:

- Whose thoughts and preferences helped you make this choice?
- The opinions and preferences of friends and classmates?
- The opinions and preferences of your parents?
- The opinions and preferences of teachers?
- The opinions and preferences of other adults?
- Someone else's opinions and preferences?

* Source questions:

- What source provided most of the information you evaluated in making your choice?
 - o Newspaper articles and editorials
 - o Radio advertisements
 - o TV advertisements
 - o Information received via email
 - o Information you sought and retrieved from the internet
 - o Conversations with students and teachers in school
 - o Conversations with friends outside of school

II. The Creation group will load the questions onto the free website to then be answered. With Zoomerang.com there is a 10-day window from the initial step to the end. Students and the teacher need to take timing into consideration.

II. The Distribution group disseminates the website link to get respondents to take the survey. Consider online tools which are safe, permitted, and effect within social networking (i.e. Facebook), school sports teams, school links, etc.)

III. The Analysis group takes the data the survey produced and decides how to present the results. Again in consultation with the teacher and other students, results are reported out.

The poll results can be **put on a free blog** (see Growing Voter website suggestions).

They can also be **built into a presentation** to be shared with other classrooms.