

Teacher Notes



The Electoral College

Activity 3 Electoral College and Political Strategy

Activity at a Glance

- ◆ **Subject:** Social Studies
- ◆ **Subject Area:** American Government
- ◆ **Category:** The Constitution
- ◆ **Topic:** The Electoral College
- ◆ **Grade Level:** 11 - 12
- ◆ **Prerequisites:** Students need to be able to create a line graph charting two different variables.
- ◆ **Total Teaching Time:** 45 minutes

Materials

- ◆ TI-83 Plus or TI-83 Plus Silver Edition
- ◆ CellSheet™ Application
- ◆ CellSheet™ File: **STATES.8xv** (completed)
- ◆ Student Work Sheet: **Campaign Strategy Guidelines, Campaign Strategy Summary Sheet**
- ◆ Internet Access for student research

Activity Overview

In this activity, students will work as teams of political strategists for either a Democratic or Republican presidential candidate in the 2004 election. Their job will be to devise a campaign strategy that will help their candidate win the electoral college vote by the most efficient means possible, focusing on states that will be projected winners for their party.

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

1. Review the total number of electoral votes (538), and the number needed to win the presidency (270).
2. Discuss with the students the complexities of organizing a presidential campaign, and in particular, the need to have a focused strategy to campaign in the most efficient way.

3. If each student does not have a completed **STATES.8xv** file, then provide the file for the students. This file contains the party of the winner of each state in the last 10 presidential elections.

During the Activity

1. Pass out the **Campaign Strategy Guidelines** sheet and discuss the rules for developing a winning strategy:
 - a. Your candidate must win enough states to garner the necessary 270 electoral votes.
 - b. You cannot target a state in which there is not a significant trend (7 out of 10 or better) for your political party.
 - c. You must target the fewest states possible to achieve the necessary 270 electoral votes.
2. Go through the process of creating a line graph for an individual state's voting results over the last ten presidential elections.
3. Pass out the **Campaign Strategy Summary** Sheet.
4. Point students to the Electoral College calculator, found at http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/calculator.html to help them identify an efficient campaign strategy for their candidate. Tell the students that this might help them quickly determine if they have enough votes to win.
5. Allow students to work in their groups to develop their strategy and fill out their **Campaign Strategy Summary** Sheet. This sheet will be submitted by the students.

After the Activity

1. Ask groups from each party who had the fewest states to win.
2. Once students turn in their **Campaign Strategy Summary** Sheet, discuss the different approaches groups employed in developing their strategies.
3. Discuss how this approach would be both practical and impractical in a presidential election.
4. Discuss whether or not they feel that employing this type of strategy of focusing on electoral votes instead of popular votes is either smart politics or subverting the will of the majority of citizens in an election.
5. Each student should write a brief position statement addressing the question above.

Student Data Sheet
Campaign Strategy Guidelines

Name: _____

Date: _____

In developing your campaign strategy, your plan must meet the following criteria:

1. Your candidate must win enough states to garner the necessary 270 electoral votes.
2. You cannot target a state in which there is not a significant trend (7 out of 10 or better) for your political party.
3. You must target the fewest states possible to achieve the necessary 270 electoral votes.

The Electoral College Calculator is located at:
http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/calculator.html.
It will help you determine when you have enough votes.

For Homework

In a short position paper, discuss whether or not you feel that employing this type of strategy (focusing on electoral votes instead of popular votes) is either smart politics or subverting the will of the majority of citizens in an election.

Provide at least two justifications for your opinion.

Suggested Rubric for Scoring Essays

5 – Exceeds Standard:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Shows understanding of content ◆ Response is thorough and complete ◆ Response is accurate ◆ Provides ample evidence to support thesis
4 – Meets Standard:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates general understanding of content ◆ Response is substantial ◆ Response is generally accurate ◆ Provides some evidence toward claim
3 – Approaches Standard:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates partial understanding of content ◆ Response not thorough but remains on topic ◆ Some minor errors ◆ Provides some evidence toward claim
2 – Partially meets Standard:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Demonstrates limited understanding of content ◆ Incomplete response that may veer off topic ◆ Response demonstrates a misunderstanding ◆ Response has errors ◆ Lacks meaningful evidence to support claim
1 – Insufficient	