

WE THE PEOPLE...OF 4-H

A LESSON IN ELECTING A PRESIDENT

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A lesson in electing a president

Skill Level

Beginner (4th/5th graders)

Educational Standards Supported

SSP.4.15, SSP.04

Learner Outcomes

The learner will be able to:

- Demonstrate understanding of US Presidential election procedures
- Define “political party”
- Demonstrate proficient use of terminology associated with the United States election (electoral college, debate)

Tag(s)

4-H Citizenship

Time Needed

30-60 minutes

Materials Needed

- Index cards for ballots
- Pen or Pencils
- Student Worksheets
- 4-H Presidential Debate Questions List

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Introduction to Content

Every four years in the United States of America, a major event takes place—the presidential election. This election determines the person who not only governs the country for the next four years but also identifies the person who will serve as the commander in chief for the United States military. This is a very important job and important time leading up to the election. So how exactly is the president of the United States elected? This lesson will demonstrate the process of electing the president of the United States as students conduct their own elections to choose a 4-H club president.

Introduction to Methodology

In this lesson, students will conduct a classroom election to elect a 4-H club president utilizing the procedures of the United States presidential election. Students will be divided into political parties, conduct primary elections and hold a national convention, presidential debates and a general election. After the election, students will discuss the pros and cons of this system.

Terms/Vocabulary/Concepts

Candidate – A person who aspires, is nominated or qualified to run for an office, membership or an award.

The Electoral College – A body of people representing each of the states who will formally cast their votes for the election of the U.S. president and vice president.

Primary Election – The election where candidates for the presidential election are nominated.

National Convention – A convention held by one of the two major political parties where a candidate for presidency is formally named.

Setting the Stage/Opening Question

Say, "Each year in 4-H clubs, we elect 4-H officers. This can be done in a number of ways. But this year, we are going to elect our officers in the same way the president of the United States is elected. As we go through our election process, it is important to remember, today is a day to learn about how the United States president is elected."

Say, "We are not here to discuss politics. We do not need to know who your parents are voting for or who you would vote for if you were old enough."

Ask, "Who knows how the president of the United States is elected?" Let students answer.

Say, "The president does get elected by votes, but it is actually a more complex process than just voting. Today we are going to begin our 4-H presidential election."

Experience

Explain to students the role of the 4-H Club president. Be sure the students are aware that speaking in front of the class at 4-H club meetings is an important part of this job.

Say, "The 4-H Club president will help lead our 4-H club meetings this year. They will talk in front of the class at each meeting along with our vice president and our secretary. Sometimes, I will ask the president to make important announcements at our meetings."

At this time, explain what a political party is. Say, "Today we are going to start by discussing political parties. Can anyone tell me what a political party is?"

After students get a chance to answer, define what a political party is. Say, "A political party is an organization of people who share similar views and who nominate a candidate for an election to a federal office. The United States of America is considered a two-party system because the majority of people vote for these two. The two most prominent political parties in the United States are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Each of these parties has their own set of political views that influence the candidate they support. The Democratic Party is represented by a donkey, and the Republican Party is represented by an elephant." (If you share this information, be sure to know why these are the symbols of the parties.)

Say, "For our election, we are going to make up our own political parties. The green party and the white party."

Strategies to Increase Student Engagement

Walk around the classroom and make sure the youth are engaging as they should be.

Be sure to take multiple nominations from each party.

Optional activity - Encourage the youth to make a list of what they would do at school or home if they were the US President for a day.

Equally divide the class into the green and white parties.

Ask students who would like to be president (reminding them that there are a lot of responsibilities that come with the job) that they will be required to speak in front of the entire class. Be sure there are students from each party who would like to be elected.

Tell students that they will need to raise their hand to nominate someone. Nominations can be made by a student standing and saying, "I nominate _____. This can be someone else or the students nominating themselves.

Explain those who have opted to run for president have now "registered" for the election. At this time, explain the primary election in simple terms.

Have students each vote for one of the candidates from their party. The two students from each party with the most votes will stay in the running for president.

Say, "Now it is time for each party to host a national convention. Say: "The National Convention is a convention hosted by each party where the party will select the candidate that will run for president."

Randomly choose 3-5 "convention delegates" for each party.

Separate the two parties into their own space in the classroom. Each candidate will speak in front of their parties and tell everyone why they should vote for them to be the party's presidential candidate.

After the short speeches, the delegates will cast their votes. The candidate who has the most votes from their party's delegates will continue to the general election. At this time, they get to choose who they would like their running mate to be.

Explain that if this presidential candidate wins, their running mate will become their vice president. After both "national conventions" are complete, it is time for speeches and debates.

Instruct both presidential candidates that they will now tell the whole class why they want to be the 4-H Club president. Say, "After the speeches, we will have a short debate" using the questions attached to this lesson.

Following the debate, randomly divide the students who are not running for president into unequal groups. Briefly, explain the electoral college system.

Say, "The way the presidential election is set up, the president is not elected by who gets the most votes across the whole nation or in this case, the whole classroom. The number of votes each person gets is called the 'popular vote.' We use the Electoral College system in the United States. What this means is for every representative a state has, that state gets an equal number of votes. For example, Tennessee has two members of the U.S. Senate and nine members of the U.S. House of Representatives. If we are adding those together, how many votes does Tennessee get?" The answer is 11.

Say, "If we had an election and the majority of Tennessee voted for candidate A, that person would get all 11 of Tennessee's electoral votes. Across the country, there are a total of 538 electoral votes. To win the presidential election, a candidate must win a minimum of 270 of those votes--this is more than half of the states' electoral votes."

Now assign each group an electoral number. Bigger groups will have bigger numbers, just as larger states have more electoral votes.

Have each student vote. Then using the electoral college system, tally the votes and announce your new 4-H club president.

The president will go on to determine who the club secretary will be by the same nomination process and a vote of hands. Encourage youth to put their heads down when voting.

Share/Process

Ask, "What is something you learned today about the United States presidential election?"

Ask, "Using this method, do you feel like your voice was heard as a voter?"

Ask, "As a candidate, how did you feel about this method versus counting the popular vote of everyone in the class?"

Generalize

Using the attached handout, make a pros/cons list about the election process.

Apply

Ask, "How can this knowledge of the United States presidential election benefit you?" Encourage the youth to go home and talk with their parents about the Electoral College.

References

[USA.gov](#)

[USembassy.gov](#)

Notes

Supplemental Information
Educational Standards Met

SSP.4.15

Examine the legacy and significance of the presidency of George Washington, including the creation of cabinet member positions, two-party split and the push for a strong central government.

SSP.04

Construct and communicate arguments supported by evidence to:

- Demonstrate and defend an understanding of ideas
- Compare and contrast viewpoints
- Illustrate cause and effect
- Predict likely outcomes
- Devise new outcomes or solutions

TIPPS
Life Skills

4th Grade

Heart – Actively listening to what others are saying, be able to restate or summarize what has been said

5th Grade

Head – Communicate information learned from a specific project area

Heart – Understand one's ability, strengths, and limitations

Hands – Define issues of a given problem or situation

Hands – As part of a group, identify and agree on a common task or goal



Pro/Con List

Below, make a list of the pros and cons to the electoral college system used for voting in the United States.

Pro

Con

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Compare and Contrast

Using the boxes below, compare and contrast the answers the candidates gave to their debate questions to help you decide who to cast your vote for.

Candidate A **Candidate B**

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4-H Presidential Debate Questions

During Classroom competitions, do you think all participants should get a ribbon? Why or Why not?

What types of subjects do you think we need to focus on the most in 4-H club meetings?

Do you think all 4-H members should be required to know the 4-H pledge?

Of the four H's, which one is the most important one to you? And why?

Why would you make a good 4-H club President? Why would your opponent make a good 4-H club president?



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