



GeoElections WebTools Lesson Plan for Teacher Use

NCSS Thematic Strand: Civic Ideals & Practices

NCSS Standard:

- Identify examples of rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- Practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.
- Explain actions citizens can take to influence public policy decisions.

Overview: Young people have a natural curiosity about the adult process of voting. This lesson will allow students to explore public resources to become a more educated and informed voter.

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to help students become aware of the rights and responsibilities of voting and to help them find the resources to be an informed voter.

Objectives:

The Student will be able to:

- ✓ Define election, vote, ballot, incumbent, candidate, polling location, precinct, and World Wide Web.
- ✓ Locate their respective polling location.
- ✓ Identify their US Congressional district, State Senate district and State House district along with local geopolitical boundaries.
- ✓ List their respective incumbents and candidates for various offices.

Materials:

For this activity you will need a computer with an Internet connection and preferably with audio capability but audio is not necessary. The computer will need to be connected to a projector for the whole class to see. You will need the web address for the elections web site. The [GeoElections WebTools Notes Page](#) and the [GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity](#) handouts are available in *Appendix B* and *Appendix C* of this lesson plan.

Procedure:**Part I, Classroom:**

1. Introductory questions.

- *What is an election?*
- *Why do we have elections?*
- *What is a vote?*
- *Who/What do we vote for?*
- *Who is a candidate?*
- *Who is an incumbent?*
- *Why do we vote?*
- *How do we vote?*
- *Where do we vote?*
- *Where can we find information about elections and voting?*
- *Who is responsible for managing the elections process?*

“We can use the World Wide Web to access information from the elections office.”

2. Hand out the GeoElections WebTools Notes Page located in *Appendix B*. Students are to use this to take notes during the demonstration.

3. Using a computer with an Internet connection and audio capability and a projector, navigate to the elections web site in front of the class.

- *Where do we find the web address of the page we are on?*
- *What is the web address of the elections web site?*

4. Identify features of the elections web site. Features will vary depending on your county. A good feature to demonstrate that is normally a constant among different counties is a "Meet your Board of Elections" feature.

- *Who is manages your elections?*
- *List 3 things about your Board of Elections.*

5. Navigate to the GeoElections WebTools feature of the web site.

6. You may wish to play the WMV file located under the help section. This "One Minute Video" is a tutorial for the use of GeoElections WebTools.

7. When finished playing the video, demonstrate some of the features illustrated in the video including: turning district on and off, zooming in and out, moving the map around, displaying candidates or incumbents, viewing the calendar, etc.

8. Demonstrate the polling location finder by entering an address using the house number, directional prefix, street name, street type, directional

- suffix, and zip code text fields. Press the Search Address button.
9. When a new map is displayed, identify the precinct, identify the blue dot as the household of the address searched, and identify the red star as the polling location.
 10. Click on the red star to identify the establishment used as the polling location and the address of the polling location.
 - *What does the blue dot represent?*
 - *What does the star represent?*
 11. Click to view a sample ballot.
 - *What is a ballot?*
 12. Discuss the sample ballot with the class.
 13. Search another address located elsewhere in the county.
 14. When a new map is displayed, identify the precinct, identify the blue dot as the household of the address searched, and identify the red star as the polling location.
 15. Click on the red star to identify the establishment used as the polling location and the address of the polling location.
 16. Click to view a sample ballot.
 17. Discuss the second sample ballot with the class.
 18. Identify differences between the two ballots.
 19. What makes the ballots different?
 - *What are some things that may influence ballot style?*
 20. Refer to the map to discuss the different political boundaries making up the different ballot styles. A variety of combinations of overlapping political boundaries will determine ballot style. Examples of political boundaries that influence ballot style include municipal boundaries, Congressional boundaries, Senate boundaries, House boundaries, and other geopolitical boundaries.
 21. Review.
 - *What is the web address of the elections web site?*
 - *Who manages the Elections?*
 - *List 3 things about your Board of Elections.*
 - *What does the blue dot represent?*
 - *What does the star represent?*
 - *What is a ballot?*
 - *What are some things that may influence ballot style?*

Part II, Computer Lab Activity:

1. Prior to accessing a computer lab handout the GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity located in *Appendix C* and assign the students to work in pairs.
2. Students are to access the GeoElections WebTools through their respective Board of Elections web site.
3. The students will take turns entering their household's address and use the information found in GeoElections WebTools to complete the GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity handout located in *Appendix C*.
4. Each student is to print a Sample Ballot from GeoElections WebTools that is specific to their household's address and bring it with them back to the classroom.

Part III, Mock Election:

1. The students are to return to the classroom with their Sample Ballots.
2. Allow time for students to gather information and research their candidates.
3. Tally the number of different ballot styles there are in the classroom. Discuss what makes their ballots different.
4. Divide the classroom into precincts based upon the number of ballot styles there are in the classroom or by their precinct according to GeoElections WebTools. Their precinct is the reply to question #3 of the GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity.
5. Assign a student to be a poll worker at each precinct. Also assign a student to be Director of Elections. You may also want to assign a Deputy Director depending on your class size.
6. The poll workers will collect the ballots and bring them to the Director of Elections.
7. The Director of Elections will tally the votes with the assistance of the Deputy Director.
8. When all ballots have been tallied, post the results in the class and discuss them.

Lesson Extension:

- ❖ Share Elections results with other classes or other schools.
- ❖ Report your results to your state elections headquarters.
- ❖ Contact local news media and share your experience with them.

Evaluation:

- The student will receive participation points for completing the GeoElections WebTools Notes Page located in *Appendix B*.
- The student will receive points for completing the GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity located in *Appendix C*.
- The student will receive participation points for participating in the mock election.

Appendix A**Vocabulary**

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Election | The act or process of electing |
| Electing | To select by vote for an office, position, or membership |
| Vote | A formal expression of opinion or will in response to a proposed decision |
| Ballot | A sheet of paper used to cast a secret vote |
| Incumbent | The holder of an office |
| Candidate | One that aspires to or is nominated or qualified for an office, membership, or award |
| Polling location | The place where votes are cast or recorded |
| Precinct | A subdivision of a county, town, city, or ward or election purposes |
| Congress | The U.S. Congress is made up of two parts, the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress meets at the U.S. Capital in Washington, D.C. Its primary duty is to write, debate, and pass bills, which are then passed on to the President for approval. |
| Senate | Each of the 50 state sends 2 people to the Senate, so there are a total of 100 senators. This means that each state has equal representation in the Senate. Each senator serves a term of 6 years. When their 6 year term is over, the people from that state may choose to elect a new senator or keep the same one. There is no limit on the number of terms a senator can serve. |
| House | In the House, representation is based on the number of people living in each state. There are a total of 435 representatives in the House. Each member represents an area of the state, known as a congressional district. The number of representatives is based on the number of districts in a state. Therefore, states with larger populations have more representation than states with smaller populations. Each state has at least one congressional district and therefore one representative in the House. |
| World Wide Web | A part of the internet to allow easier navigation of the network through the use of graphical user interfaces and hypertext links between different addresses. |
| Board of Elections | The Board of Elections is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the election laws adopted by the state legislature. |

Appendix B

GeoElections WebTools Note Page

What is the web address for the Office of Elections?



Who manages the elections process?



Three facts about the Board of Elections:



What do these symbols represent on the map?

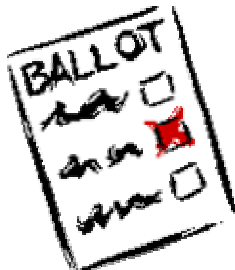


= _____



= _____

What determines your ballot style?



Appendix C

GeoElections WebTools Lab Activity

1. What is the Establishment
Name of your polling location? _____ (1 point)

2. What is the address of your polling location? (2 points)

3. What precinct are you voting in? _____ (1 point)

4. What ballot style are you using? _____ (1 point)

5. What is the date of your next election? _____ (1 point)

6. List your **district number** and **incumbent** for each of the following: (8 points)

| | District | Incumbent |
|--------------------|----------|-----------|
| U.S. Congressional | | |
| State Senate | | |
| State House | | |

7. Compare you answers with your partner's answers. Are they different? If so why are they different? (5 points)