

Voting/Election Lesson Plan
for Second Street Senior Bears

Age of children: 4-6

Grade of children: Kindergarten

Subject: Government

Lesson goal (real world relevance): To gain a basic understanding of the political election process and voting procedure and thereby increase the likelihood of the students' future participation in government (as voters or representatives).

Lesson (performance) objectives: Students should be able to

- 1) say why we vote.
- 2) give examples of who and what we vote for.
- 3) partake in a class vote and be willing to abide by the majority group decision (if they agreed on a vote).
- 4) follow the steps their parents take in the next election and assimilate more of the details.

Materials needed:

Christelow, Eileen, *Vote!* (New York: Clarion Books, 2003).

Ring, Susan, *Election Connection* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004).
[pp. 15-16]

Maestro, Betsy, *The Voice of the People* (New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1996). [p. 4]

Cunningham, Kevin, *Power to the people: how we elect the president and other officials* (Chanhassen, Minnesota: The Child's World, 2005). [p. 24]

Example yard signs from an election campaign

Official voter registration form

Play voter registration forms (example attached)

Writing utensils for filling out forms

Official voter card

Play voter cards (example attached)

Sample ballot

Play sample ballots (example attached)

Example political advertisements

Voter roll (list of registered voters, example attached)

Play ballots (example attached)

Voting booth (an area of the classroom)

Ballot box

Stickers for voters

White board and markers to tally the results

Anticipatory set (introduction): Many of the children are already familiar with elections: some can name previous candidates (bumper stickers on their parents' cars) and others recognize "I voted" stickers (which I wore once when visiting). Apparently the "question of the day" in the bear room is also answered by what the kids call voting. However, it is unlikely that they have a good overview of the formal process used for governmental elections. A local election is approaching in Tucson and they are likely to have seen the numerous yard signs around if not heard or seen broadcast advertisements. Their curiosity should be piqued. In addition, a recent incident in which some issue was decided by chanting yes and no back and forth indicates that they may not realize that they can apply elections and voting to their own joint decisions. On the other hand, they should also know that they can't vote to enable the majority to mistreat the minority in violation of the school rules.

Procedure: After the introduction (which includes yard signs and an example of voting in school from *The Voice of the People*), the lesson continues with the reading of the book *Vote!* with supplemental paragraphs and illustrations taken from the other three books listed. The second half consists of a play election beginning with voter registration and culminating in the counting of the votes. For this particular election, the class's favorite pattern block (see ballots) will be chosen.

Notes on the book:

- Skip the front and back covers and pages after 43. These pages are for substantially older children.
- p5. Ask what a mayor is, and governor and president. Voting is about choosing.
- p9. Ask if there were other ways to choose a dog. They could have gotten both dogs or gotten none. They could have looked harder for a third dog that everyone liked, or tried a cat instead. They could have convinced the neighbor to buy the second dog and then visited it.
- p12. Explain that 18 is only for governmental elections.
- p14. Change text from "Founding Fathers" to "founders."
- p15. Add Native Americans. Insert pages from *Election Connection* here.
- p17. Show registration form and voter card.
- p19. You'll know it's about time to vote when you get a sample ballot and advertisements appear (show both).
- p28. Mention negative ads say something bad about the opponent. Misleading ads are on reason we have to be smart. That way we won't be tricked.
- p29. What else could we vote for? Could we vote that nobody with purple eyes can go in the tree house? Can we vote that calling Keith bad names is OK?
- p30. Note yard signs.
- p32. Show picture of real voting booth in *Power to the People*.
- p42. ...and voting is exactly what we're going to do.

Election stages:

1. Registration. Children fill out the form. They can use "Second Street" copied from the white board as their address.

2. Receipt of voter card. This is preprinted with their name on it.
3. Receipt of sample ballot and instructions on filling it out.
4. Performance of campaign advertisements by volunteers. Some can be impersonations of the candidates: "Hi, I'm a yellow hexagon and I am a prettier color than everyone else plus I have more sides. Please vote for me." Others can be testimonials: "My name is Eddie. I'm a very important person around here. I've thought long and hard about the candidates and have chosen the square. I hope you will, too."
5. Appearance of voters on election day. Voters present their voter card and check off their name on the roll.
6. Receipt of ballot and procession to the voting booth with a marker.
7. Completion of ballot.
8. Deposit of ballot into ballot box.
9. Receipt of sticker.
10. Tallying of votes. The kids will say which number comes next and figure out which is the largest number. If there is a tie, we will have a runoff election the next time.

Closure: Announce the winner and that everyone is invited to a party at the winner's house. Ask some individuals what their favorite block is and then what the favorite block of the class is. Was it a good way to make a decision?

Evaluation: Ask the kids again why we vote (to make choices or decisions), who or what we vote for (presidents, spending of tax dollars), who wins the election (the person with the most votes). Review if they are confused. Mention that the upcoming election is on November 8 and that it would be great if they can go with their parents or grandparents and come to school wearing an "I voted" sticker.