EVERY VOTE COUNTS!

Speeches, campaign posters, and the anticipation of who will win—these are all part of Election Day. In the United States, national elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, along with many state and local elections. Students can begin to learn about the democratic process by engaging in these fun classroom activities!

Did You Know?

- The word ballot comes from the Italian word ballotta. Hundreds of years ago, a person voting in Italy would cast a secret vote using a little colored ball called a ballotta.
- Originally, voters in the American colonies had to travel to their colony's capital to vote. Because this could be a long and sometimes dangerous journey, people began to vote locally. A horseback rider then carried the results to each capital to be counted.

The History of Voting

Throughout history people have voted, but in different ways. In ancient Greece, a vote was cast by dropping either a white or black stone into a box. Long ago in England, people voted verbally. Each voter would call out the name of the person he wanted to elect and his choice would be recorded. In Australia people voted by secret ballot. The names of the candidates were printed on a piece of paper and each voter marked his ballot in a private booth. Experiment by having children vote using each method. First, ask a yes or no question such as “Do you like ice cream?” and let children vote verbally. Next, ask another yes or no question and have children vote by dropping a light dried bean (yes) or a dark dried bean (no) into a shoe box with an opening cut in the top. Last, vote by secret ballot using the ballot pattern (page 44). Write a question on the board with several choices and let students vote by marking their choice and dropping the ballots into the shoe box. Have students compare the different methods and talk about possible reasons why people vote in elections today using secret ballots.

Literature Selections

The Vote: Making Your Voice Heard by Linda Scher: Raintree/Steck-Vaughn, 1996. (Informational book, 48 pg.) Discusses who can vote, who does vote, where to vote, and how to vote wisely.


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