GET OUT THE VOTE

Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet
Get out the Vote

Grades: 9-12
Duration: 2-3 class periods

OBJECTIVES:

Students will examine and analyze sources about voter registration and turnout and make connections between this information and the history of suffrage in the United States.

Students will demonstrate an appreciation for the importance of exercising one’s right to vote by creating a “Get out the Vote” campaign poster targeted at a group of con voters.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS:

State standards may include the following strands/topics:

Active Citizenship in the 21st Century; Civics, Government, and Human Rights; History, Culture, and Perspectives

MATERIALS:

- A Brief History of Voting Rights in the U.S. (included)
- Table 6, Reasons for Not Registering and Voting (included)
- Dissecting the 2008 Electorate: Most Diverse in U.S. History (included)
- Paper/posterboard and additional art supplies for “Get out the Vote” campaign posters

PROCEDURE:

After watching the Alice at a Glance presentation, discuss with students what they already knowing about voting and the democratic process in the U.S. How do people vote? Who is allowed to vote? Encourage students to share their own experiences and knowledge about voting and elections.
Remind students that many Americans, including women, have had to fight a long political struggle in order to have their right to vote recognized. As a class, review the handout “A Brief History of Voting Rights” in the U.S.

Introduce students to their task: they are nonprofit workers developing a “Get out the Vote” campaign aimed at encouraging Americans to register and vote in an upcoming election. Before they begin, they need some background on what voter turnout looked like in a past major election. Students should read the Pew Research Center Report “Dissecting the 2008 Electorate: Most Diverse in U.S. History” and answer the related questions. Depending on the class time available, instructors may wish to assign this as homework. When students have completed the article and related questions, discuss them as a class.

In groups, students should then consider Table 6: Reasons for Not Registering and Voting, as released by the U.S. Census Bureau. Assist students as they work in groups to identify an area of concern: for example, they may notice that white non-Hispanic Americans were the most likely to state that they did not vote because they had no interest in the candidates, while a large percentage of citizens aged 18-24 claimed that they were too busy or had conflicting schedules.

Once students have identified their target audience and the issue they wish to confront, students should develop a poster or advertisement designed to reach this target audience and persuade them to register and vote. You may wish to share with students examples of other campaigns, such as MTV’s 2008 “Choose or Lose” campaign.

Students should present their work to the class and share what evidence led them to create this campaign. Afterwards, engage the class in a discussion: why don’t people vote? Historically, how have voting rights changed in the U.S.? Why is it important that citizens exercise their right to vote?

EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated based on their participation in small-group and whole-class discussion, their analysis of the resources provided, and their creation of a mini-campaign aimed at a group of nonvoters.
ADAPTATIONS:

- Consider preceding this lesson with the introductory activities “Cast Your Ballot” or “Your Voice, Your Rights” from this curriculum.
- After analyzing the data, the instructor may wish to assign students the same group for added support in the class. For example, the instructor may choose to assign all students the target audience of 18-24 year olds. Consider posting the students’ campaigns in the school to display them to the rest of the school community.

NOTES & ASSESSMENT:

Notes or modifications to remember when using this lesson again:
(Numbers in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percent distribution of reasons for not voting and registering</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race and Hispanic origin</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>White alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total nonvoters</td>
<td>15,167</td>
<td>12,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for not voting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too busy, conflicting schedule</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or disability</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not like candidates or campaign issues</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reason</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of town</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or refused</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration problems</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconvenient polling place</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation problems</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgot to vote</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad weather conditions</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total not registered</td>
<td>30,402</td>
<td>24,648</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reasons for not registering

1 Represents zero or rounds to zero.
2 Only individuals who reported being registered and also reported not voting were asked the question about reason for not voting.
3 Includes only those respondents who answered “no” to the question, “Were you registered in the election of November 2008?”
4 Includes individuals reporting an associate’s degree.


Voting and Register of November 2008. U.S. Census Bureau, May 2010
A Brief History of Voting Rights in the U.S.

1776

1770-1790
States have their own naturalization laws to determine when immigrants become citizens and therefore have the right to vote.

1856
North Carolina is the last state to repeal property requirements related to voting. All white males may vote even if they do not own property. However, they must pay a poll tax. Literacy tests and religious tests also apply in some areas.

1870
The 15th Amendment is ratified, recognizing former slaves’ right to vote. However, African Americans are frequently discouraged from voting or intimidated at polling places.

1920
The 19th Amendment recognizes American women’s right to vote. Prior to 1920, women’s suffrage was recognized only on a state-by-state basis.

1924
Native Americans can vote, as Congress passes the Indian Citizenship Act and grants full citizenship to Native Americans.

1961
The 23rd Amendment grants residents of Washington, D.C. the right to vote.

1964
The 24th Amendment prohibits poll taxes. This guarantees that Americans cannot be denied their right to vote because they are unable to pay a poll tax.

1965
Congress passes the Voting Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination related to voting rights.

1971
The 26th Amendment guarantees that all U.S. citizens can vote at the age of eighteen. In the past, Americans had to be twenty-one years old to vote.
Dissecting the 2008 Electorate: Most Diverse in U.S. History

Black women had the highest voter turnout rate in November’s election -- a first.

By Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director, Pew Hispanic Center, Paul Taylor, Executive Vice President, Pew Research Center

April 30, 2009

The electorate in last year’s presidential election was the most racially and ethnically diverse in U.S. history, with nearly one-in-four votes cast by non-whites, according to a new analysis of Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center.1 The nation’s three biggest minority groups -- blacks, Hispanics and Asians -- each accounted for unprecedented shares of the presidential vote in 2008.

Overall, whites2 made up 76.3% of the record 131 million people3 who voted in November’s presidential election, while blacks made up 12.1%, Hispanics 7.4% and Asians...
2.5%. The white share is the lowest ever, yet is still higher than the 65.8% white share of the total U.S. population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009).

The unprecedented diversity of the electorate last year was driven by increases both in the number and in the turnout rates of minority eligible voters.

The levels of participation by black, Hispanic and Asian eligible voters all increased from 2004 to 2008, reducing the voter participation gap between themselves and white eligible voters. This was particularly true for black eligible voters. Their voter turnout rate increased 4.9 percentage points, from 60.3% in 2004 to 65.3% in 2008, nearly matching the voter turnout rate of white eligible voters (66.1%). For Hispanics, participation levels also increased, with the voter turnout rate rising 2.7 percentage points, from 47.2% in 2004 to 49.9% in 2008. Among Asians, voter participation rates increased from 44.6% in 2004 to 47.0% in 2008. Meanwhile, among white eligible voters, the voter turnout rate fell slightly, from 67.2% in 2004 to 66.1% in 2008.

Much of the surge in black voter participation in 2008 was driven by increased participation among black women and younger voters. The voter turnout rate among eligible black female voters increased 5.1 percentage points, from 63.7% in 2004 to 68.8% in 2008. Overall, among all racial, ethnic and gender groups, black women had the highest voter turnout rate in November’s election -- a first.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Change in Voter Turnout Rates Among Eligible Voters, 2008 and 2004 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Whites include only non-Hispanic whites. Blacks include only non-Hispanic blacks. Asians include only non-Hispanic Asians. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown.

Blacks ages 18 to 29 increased their voter turnout rate by 8.7 percentage points, from 49.5% in 2004 to 58.2% in 2008, according to an analysis by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University. The voter turnout rate among young black eligible voters was higher than that of young eligible voters of any other racial and ethnic group in 2008. This, too, was a first.

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4 The remaining share of voters in 2008 was of other racial or ethnic heritage. This group includes Native Americans and mixed-race voters. In 2008, 1.7% of all voters were of other race or ethnicity, up from 1.5% in 2004.
The increased diversity of the electorate was also driven by population growth, especially among Latinos. Between 2004 and 2008, the number of Latino eligible voters rose from 16.1 million in 2004 to 19.5 million in 2008, or 21.4%. In comparison, among the general population, the total number of eligible voters increased by just 4.6%.

In 2008, Latino eligible voters accounted for 9.5% of all eligible voters, up from 8.2% in 2004.

Similarly, the share of eligible voters who were black increased from 11.6% in 2004 to 11.8% in 2008. The share of eligible voters who were Asian also increased, from 3.3% in 2004 to 3.4% in 2008. In contrast, the share of eligible voters who were white fell from 75.2% in 2004 to 73.4% in 2008.

With population growth and increased voter participation among blacks, Latinos and Asians, members of all three groups cast more votes in 2008 than in 2004. Two million more blacks and 2 million more Latinos reported voting in 2008 than said the same in 2004. Among Asians, 338,000 more votes were reported cast in 2008 than in 2004. The number of white voters in 2008 was also up, but only slightly -- increasing from 99.6 million in 2004 to 100 million in 2008.

The Pew Research Center analysis of Census Bureau data also finds a distinct regional pattern in the state-by-state increases in turnout. From 2004 to 2008, the greatest increases were in Southern states with large black eligible voter populations: Mississippi (where the voter turnout rate was up 8 percentage points), Georgia (7.5 points), North Carolina (6.1 points) and Louisiana (6.0 points). It also increased in the District of Columbia (6.9 points).  

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5 According to Pew Research Center tabulations from the Census Bureau’s 2007 American Community Survey, blacks constitute 35% of eligible voters in Mississippi, 30% in Georgia, 21% in North Carolina, 31% in Louisiana and 58% in the District of Columbia. Nationally, 12.2% of all eligible voters are black.
According to the exit polls in last year’s presidential election, the candidate preference of non-white voters was distinctly different from that of white voters. Nearly all (95%) black voters cast their ballot for Democrat Barack Obama. Among Latino voters, 67% voted for Obama while 31% voted for Republican John McCain. Among Asian voters, 62% supported Obama and 35% voted for McCain. In contrast, white voters supported McCain (55%) over Obama (43%).

This report summarizes the participation of voters in the 2008 presidential election and follows reports from the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center, on the Latino vote and Latino public opinion about the election and the candidates.

The data for this report are derived from the November Voting and Registration Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 55,000 households conducted by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The November Voting and Registration Supplement is one of the richest sources available of information about the characteristics of voters. It is conducted after Election Day and relies on survey respondent self-reports of voting and voter registration.
Voter Turnout in the 2008 Election

1. Briefly summarize the main idea of this article.

2. Consider Figure 1: “Demographic Composition of Voters by Race and Ethnicity, 1988-2008.” Between 1988 and 2008, briefly explain the change in voter turnout for each race/ethnicity listed in the chart: White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian.

3. Examine Table 1: “Change in Voter Turnout Rates Among Eligible Voters, 2008 and 2004.” After reading this article, make an educated guess about what might have caused the changes in voter turnout. Support your thinking with examples from the article.