

8

Post-Election Analysis

OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze the results of the official election and Student Vote and reflect on the outcome and their participation.

KEY WORDS

analyze, seat count, popular vote percentage, voter turnout, governing party, minority government, majority government, official opposition, opposition party

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What was the outcome of the Student Vote parallel election locally and provincially?
- What was the outcome of the general election locally and provincially?
- What is the difference between a majority and minority government?
- Who will form the next government?
- How did campaign events impact the outcome of the election?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- Handout 4.1: 2012 Election Results

TEACHING STRATEGIES**Hook: 5 min**

1. Announce the results of your school's Student Vote parallel election. Who received the most votes? Was it a close race?
2. Compare the results of your school's vote with the results of other schools in your electoral division. Are the results similar or different? How did the results vary between schools? (Individual school results can be found at www.studentvote.ca/ab2015)

Teacher Note: Remember to wait until the day following the official election to share the Student Vote results. Student election officials at your school should be sworn to secrecy.

Discussion: 5-10 min

Which local candidate was elected in your electoral division in the general election? Which party formed the new government?

Instruction: 10 min

1. Seat count is the term used to show the number of representatives that each party will have in the

legislature. It reflects the number of local election races won by each party.

2. Popular vote is the term used to show the support a political party received across the province. It is shown as a percentage and is calculated by dividing the number of votes a party received by the total number of votes in the election.
3. The party that has the most seats (usually) forms government. The party that has the second-highest number of seats becomes the official opposition. Any other party is called an opposition party.
4. If the governing party has more than half of all the seats (44 or more in Alberta), they will have a majority government. If they have less than half (43 or fewer), they will have a minority government.
5. In order to pass any legislation (laws) or budgets, the bills must have support from more than half of the members of the legislature. If the governing party has a minority government, they will need to gain the support of the opposition parties in order to pass anything.

Activity: 30-35 min

1. In groups, have students analyze the results of the general election and the Student Vote parallel election for the current and last election.
 - a) Province-wide seat count comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - b) Province-wide popular vote comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - c) Local election results comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - d) Province-wide seat count comparison (2012 vs. current election)
 - e) Province-wide popular vote comparison (2012 vs. current election)

Teacher Note: Past election results can be found on Handout 4.1.

2. Have a follow-up conversation after analyzing the results and media reports. Consider the following questions:
 - Were there any big surprises in the election results?

- Which parties gained or lost seats since the last election? Why do you think that happened?
- Were the Student Vote results similar to the official election results? Why or why not?
- Which type of graph works best for displaying various types of election results?



Debrief: 5 min

Have a brief closing discussion about the outcome of the election and participation in the Student Vote program. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- Why is it important to analyze the results? What is there to be learned?
- Did the election results turn out as expected? Were there any events that might have influenced the results?
- What did you learn about politics and the election process from your participation in the Student Vote program?
- Will you vote in the future?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Once a candidate is elected to the legislature, he or she has to make decisions about how to pursue issues on behalf of his or her constituency. Have students write to their newly elected MLA regarding an issue they believe should be considered a priority to address.

B. Choose a local candidate in your electoral division who received a significant proportion of the votes in the Student Vote election but did not secure a seat in the Alberta Legislature. Invite the candidate into your school for a conversation with your class. Consider asking questions about their campaign experience and the candidate's future plans.

C. Give students a chance to share their election scrapbooks from the campaign. Each student could choose two of their favourite entries to share with the class.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

How do I analyze election results?

Under a First-Past-the-Post or Single-Member Plurality system, election results are analyzed by the number of candidates elected by each political party. In other words, the number of seats each political party will have in the legislature. In Alberta, the 87 seats will be divided among registered political parties and independent candidates.

The number of votes cast for each political party can also be examined. This analysis provides an indication of the level of support across the province and is expressed by a percentage (popular vote percentage).

Who will form government? What kind of government will it be?

The political party with the most seats (usually) forms government and their leader becomes the premier of the province.

A minority government is a government in which the governing party has the most seats but less than half the total (43 or fewer in Alberta).

A majority government is a government in which the governing party has an absolute majority of the seats (more than half). In Alberta, a political party has to win at least 44 seats to win a majority government.

In order to pass any legislation (laws) or budgets, the bills must have support from more than half of the members of the legislature. If the governing party has a minority government, they will need to gain the support of the opposition parties in order to pass anything. If the government does not have their support on money-related bills, the governing party can lose confidence of the legislature. This usually results in another election.

Which party will form the official opposition?

The political party that receives the second-highest number of seats takes on the role of the official opposition. It is their responsibility to hold the government to account and to question their actions. The official opposition organizes a shadow cabinet to act as expert critics to each government ministry.

Which issues will be forefront on the agenda for the new legislature?

The throne speech outlines the government's plans and initiatives. The speech is delivered by the lieutenant governor at the beginning of each new session of the legislature.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Alberta General Election results — www.electionsalberta.ab.ca
- Student Vote Alberta results — www.studentvote.ca/ab2015
- Newspapers and media websites