

8

Post-Election Analysis

OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze the results of the official election and Student Vote election, 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 election locally and provincially?
- What was the outcome of the general election locally and provincially?
- Who will form the next government? What type of government will it be?
- How did campaign events influence the outcome of the election?
- How has this election experience helped prepare you for the future?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- Handout 4.3: 2012 Election Results

TEACHING STRATEGIES**Hook: 15-20 min**

1. Announce the results of your school's Student Vote election. Who received the most number of votes? Was it a close race?
2. Compare the results of your school's election with the results of other schools in your electoral division. Are the results similar or different? Is this surprising? Why? (All individual school results can be found at www.studentvote.ca/ab2015)
3. Share the province-wide results of the Student Vote election. Which party attracted the greatest support? Which party won the most seats and formed the government? Which party formed the official opposition? Are you surprised with the Student Vote results?

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

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. 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.

Discussion: 5-10 min

Which local candidate was elected in your electoral division in the general election? Which party formed the new government? Is it a minority or a majority government? What are the benefits and challenges of each type of government?

Activity: 25-40 min

1. In groups, have students analyze and compare the results of the official election and the Student Vote election.

Use the following comparisons for reporting, analysis and discussion:

- a) Province-wide seat count comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
- b) Province-wide popular vote comparison

- (General election vs. Student Vote)
 c) Province-wide seat count comparison (2012 vs. current election)
 d) Province-wide popular vote comparison (2012 vs. current election)
 e) Local electoral division results comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)

Teacher Note: The 2012 election results are displayed on Handout 4.3.

- Compare news stories from several media websites and regional and/or local newspapers. Analyze the portrayal of the election outcome and results. Did the sources report the results in a similar way? Can you detect any bias? What groups seem the most happy or unhappy with the results?
- Have a follow-up conversation after analyzing the results and media reports. Consider the following questions:
 - Which parties gained or lost seats? Why?
 - Does the popular vote reflect the seat count? If not, should it?
 - Were there any big surprises or upsets in the election results?
 - Did certain regions change drastically? If so, why?
 - Did the Student Vote results reflect the general election results? Why or why not?
 - Which type of graph works best for displaying 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.

- Were you pleased with the results? Why or why not?
- What did you learn about politics and the election process from your participation in the Student Vote program?
- Will you vote in the future? Why or why not?
- In what ways can you influence government during and between elections?

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. After the election, the premier must confirm the organization of government ministries and also select their cabinet. What criteria should the premier use for selecting their cabinet? Follow the news and analyze the decisions made by the premier.

C. 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 provincial legislature. Invite the candidate into your class for a post-election debrief to discuss their experience and future plans.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

How do I analyze election results?

Under a 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.

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
- Newspaper and media websites