Election: Preferential Voting System
Curriculum Outcome Links: Health and Physical Education   20/11/07
Subject:

Indicators:

Students will learn:

- skills and understandings about the preferential voting system in the Federal Election.

Background

The way Australians vote is different to almost everyone else in the world. It's because of something called preferential voting. It means that someone who is number one after the votes are first counted can sometimes still lose the election. How can that be? Nathan Bazley explains it all - with a little bit of help from the ABC's election guru Antony Green.

Conduct your own class or home vote:

- Decide what you would like to vote for. For example a class electoral monitor, class daily news reporter, class colour, favourite book, food or song.
- Make a voting card showing each of the different options students can vote for.
- Discuss how each student needs to vote for each option on the card, as this is how they show their preferences.
- Choose some students to count the preferences or do this together on a display or SMARTBOARD. You will need to count all the formal votes, according to where the voter placed number "1" for each listed item or name.
- An absolute majority is when one option receives 50% plus 1 of the votes. If an absolute majority is not apparent in the first count, the option with the least amount of votes is dropped. Those votes are distributed to the remaining options according to the next available preference. For example, where voters placed their number "2" preference.
- If no option has 50% plus 1 after the second round of counting, then the counting procedure is continued. Again the option with the lowest number of votes is dropped and those votes are re-distributed according to where voters placed the next available preference for the options remaining in the count.
- Eventually a winner is declared.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a preferential voting system. Predict what could happen if it was not used and the candidate with the largest number of 1st preferences wins.
- Talk about other applications for preferential voting systems at school for example.

Teaching and Learning Follow-up Suggestions

VERBAL/ LINGUISTIC

Recall the past Behind the News election stories and read the 2007 Election Guide, which has been posted to all Australian homes. Make a series of 'Did you know?' statements for example:

Did you know?
A person serving a prison sentence of less than 3 years is entitled to vote. Prisoners are able to vote by post or a mobile polling service.

Some defence personnel who are serving overseas will be able to vote electronically for the first time this year.

LOGICAL AND MATHEMATICAL
Visit the ABC Interactive map. Each student can choose an electorate to research and give a presentation to the class, including its location, size, history and trivia, candidates and issues. Present their findings as a short talk or write a short report and add it to a map of Australia.

VISUAL/ SPATIAL
Visit the following website http://www.aec.gov.au/ and find out how voting is organised for:
- People overseas
- Prisoners
- Indigenous and remote communities
- Electors with a disability
- New voters

Students can be assigned to research one of these groups and present their findings to the rest of the class in the form of a poster, painting, model or short talk.

BODILY/KINAESTHETIC
Role-play how the preferential voting system is counted.

INTRAPERSONAL/ LINGUISTIC
Visit the ABC Electoral Website and find out the names of the candidates in your local area. Design and make a sample-voting card for your local area. Take it home and quiz your parents to find out what they know about each candidate.

⍦ **Related Research Links**

ABC Election: interactive tracking maps, charts, information and results.
http://www.abc.net.au/elections/federal/2007/

How to vote animation
http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/virtualvoting/data/english.html

Explanation of preferential system
http://www.eca.gov.au/systems/single/by_category/preferential.htm

Where and how to vote
http://www.aec.gov.au/

2