
Do we need the Electoral College?



Supporting Questions

1. What is the Electoral College?
2. What are the pros and cons of the Electoral College?
3. Does the Electoral College function today as it did originally?

9-12 Civics Inquiry

Do we need the Electoral College?

Arkansas Standards for Social Studies	PD.5.C.2 Analyze the election process in federal, state, and local governments (e.g., voter registration, primary election, general election)
Staging the Question	View the You Tube Clip Does My Vote Count? and begin a discussion of how elections work.

Supporting Question 1
What is the Electoral College?
Formative Performance Task
Write a paragraph the Electoral College as it is used in America.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: What is the Electoral College?</p> <p>Source B: Schoolhouse Rock Electoral College video</p> <p>Source C: Why the Electoral College?</p>

Supporting Question 2
What are the pros and cons of the Electoral College?
Formative Performance Task
Create a T chart to illustrate pros and cons of the electoral college.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: The Electoral College: Top 3 Pros and Cons</p> <p>Source B: Chart of Pros and Cons of Electoral College</p>

Supporting Question 3
Does the Electoral College function today as it did originally?
Formative Performance Task
Create a position in support or opposition to the question and support with evidence.
Featured Sources
<p>Source A: Defending the Electoral College</p> <p>Source B: NPR: Critics Work to get rid of the Electoral College</p> <p>Source C: Why The Electoral College Is More Relevant Today Than Ever Before</p>

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: “Do we need the Electoral College?” Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that discusses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from both historic and current sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION: Create an alternative plan to elect the president of the United States.
Taking Informed Action	<p>UNDERSTAND: Investigate the current political climate in relation to the Electoral College.</p> <p>ASSESS: Poll 10 registered voting adults to discover what they know about the Presidential election process.</p> <p>ACT: Create a pamphlet or a Public Service video on how Arkansans fit into the election process of the President.</p>

9-12 Civics Inquiry

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the Electoral College. By investigating the compelling question “Do we need the Electoral College?” students evaluate process the United States uses to select the president. The formative performance tasks help students build knowledge and practice skills through the course of the inquiry and support students as they seek understand how their votes are counted in a presidential election. As a summative assessment, students create an evidence-based argument about the Electoral College.

In addition to the Key Idea listed previously, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding from the C3 Framework.

D2.Civ.2.9-12 Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans’ participation over time, and alternate models from other countries, past the present.

It is important to note that this inquiry requires prerequisite knowledge of historical events and ideas. Thus, students should have already studied the constitutional requirements for elections.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Do we need the Electoral College?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives. This is a contemporary debate in political circles and may well have been a topic the students will have heard at home or in the community.

9-12 Civics Inquiry

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question— “Do we need the Electoral College?” —teachers may prompt students with the YouTube “Does My Vote Count.” This should help spark a discussion about voting. Teacher may want to use the phrase “my vote doesn’t count” as a way to spur the discussion. To help facilitate the inquiry, teachers may want to keep a list of questions students ask as they discuss the video.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“What is the electoral college?”—has students investigate sources and writing a paragraph description about how the Electoral College functions. Featured Source A is an overview of the Electoral College from the National Archives. Featured Source B is a Schoolhouse Rock video about the Electoral College. Featured Source C is a History Central article that explores why we use the Electoral College.

Links to Feature Sources:

Source A: [What is the Electoral College?](#)

Source B: Schoolhouse Rock Electoral College video

Source C: [Why the Electoral College?](#)

Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“What are the pros and cons of the Electoral College?”—students will investigate both the positive and negative reactions to the use of the Electoral College. The sources provide students with detailed information about experts’ opinions on what works and does not work in the Electoral College. Using the information from the sources, students create a chart to illustrate the pros and cons of the Electoral College. Featured Source A is a website listing a top 3 of the pros and cons of the Electoral College. Featured Source B is a chart that expands on those ideas.

Links to Feature Sources:

Source A: [The Electoral College: Top 3 Pros and Cons](#)

Source B: [Chart of Pros and Cons of Electoral College](#)

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“Does the Electoral College function today as it did originally?”—students will read three articles about the Electoral College. The formative performance task asks students to create a position statement in support or opposition to the question and to provide evidence to back up their position. In addition to the previous featured sources, the sources for this task focus on the relevance of the Electoral College. Featured Source A is a reading with five reasons to keep the current system. Featured Source B is an article advocating replacement of the current system. Featured Source C is an article that explains why the Electoral College is more relevant today than ever before.

Links to Feature Sources:

Source A: [Defending the Electoral College](#)

Source B: [NPR: Critics Work to get rid of the Electoral College](#)

Source C: [Why The Electoral College Is More Relevant Today Than Ever Before](#)

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined multiple sources about the process of electing the president of the United States. Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this summative task, students construct an evidence-based argument using multiple sources to answer the compelling question “Do we need the Electoral College?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, essay, or debate.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- The Founding Fathers gave much thought to the idea that the election of the President should not be subject to the passions of the electorate, and the Electoral College retains that sense of control in the hands of an elite group of electors.
- The Electoral College is in place to keep certain regions from controlling who is elected president.
- It is highly likely, and has happened, that a president can be selected by Electoral College but did not win the popular vote. This takes the decision out of the hands of many of the electorate.
- The Electoral College is outdated and irrelevant in our nation today, as we are too large to fit into the limits set by the Founding Fathers.

To extend their arguments, teachers may have students participate in a classroom discussion about the Electoral College and pose ideas for an alternative plan that would still meet Constitutional guidelines.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by drawing on their understandings of the Electoral College and the process to elect the President of the United States.

To *understand*, students can investigate the current political climate in relation to the Electoral College. To *assess* the issue, students can poll members of their town about their knowledge and understanding of the Electoral College and the process of the electing the president of the United States. To *act*, students can create a pamphlet or a public service video on how individuals fit into the election process of the president.