Research Lesson

Persistent Issue: What should society do to promote fairness and justice for people who live within its jurisdiction?

Topic Specific Question: Under what circumstances should people convicted of a crime be allowed to vote?

Lesson Purposes

Enable students to be able to:

1. Discuss the beliefs and philosophies that underpin the debate of whether voting is a civil right or privilege
2. Weigh the pros and cons associated with allowing people convicted of a felony to vote
3. Predict the effects on communities (and democracy) of potential decisions at the state and federal level

Lesson Summary

This lesson explores several options for voters and state lawmakers to pursue concerning whether (and under what circumstances) people convicted of a felony should be allowed to vote. In this lesson, students will participate in a seemingly impromptu discussion that centers around the notion of "who should vote on a classroom or school issue" (e.g., should there be preferred activity time this week, should students be allowed to leave campus during lunchtime, should students be exempt from exams if they have an A in every class). The issue is unimportant, whereas the *criteria for deciding who should vote* is crucial (e.g., all students, no students, students with an A in all classes). The discussion transitions to the topic and content for the day. Students receive a think-aloud document that provides a window into voters' mindsets as they wrestle with the dilemma of the best, most fair, and most democratic way to treat people convicted of crimes as it relates to voting. After reading this background information, students break into expert groups to more closely analyze four of the potential options. The students jigsaw into decision-making groups where each option is represented and discussed. The instructor tells students which option their states really follow. The lesson assessment includes students completing the required essay.

Lesson Introduction

In this lesson, students will participate in a seemingly impromptu discussion (**Think_Aloud_Discussion**) that centers around the notion of "who should vote on a classroom or school issue" (e.g., should there be preferred activity time this week, should students be allowed to leave campus during lunchtime, should students be exempt from exams if they have an A in every class). The issue is unimportant, whereas the *criteria for deciding who should vote* is crucial (e.g., all students, no students, students with an A in all classes). The discussion transitions to the topic and content for the day

Lesson Activity

Students receive a think-aloud document (**Think_Aloud_Narrative**) that provides a window into voters' mindsets as they wrestle with the dilemma of *the best, most fair, and most democratic way* to treat people convicted of crimes as it relates to voting. After reading this background information, students break into expert groups to more closely analyze four of the potential options with additional resources (**Think_Aloud_Resources**). The students jigsaw into decision-making groups where each option is represented and discussed, and students complete a data retrieval chart (**Think_Aloud_Voting_DRC**).

Lesson Concludes

The instructor reveals to students which option their *states really follow*.

Lesson Assessment

The lesson assessment includes students completing the *required essay* (**Think_Aloud_Essay**). And if students need additional scaffolding they can be introduced to the (**Think_Aloud_Essay_Scaffold**).