

A Voting Experience

1. Inform the class that they will have an opportunity to acquire a new game or play equipment for the class. As a class, ask students to brainstorm to create a list of preferred items to be purchased. The teacher should act as "secretary" and list ideas on poster paper.
2. Put the poster in a visible location in the classroom. At this time, the teacher should announce that a Primary Election will be held on the following day (or two). Explain that a primary election limits the final choices to two (or three, if desired).
3. For the Primary Election, give each student a blank (3 x 5) index card. Designate a ballot box (perhaps a manila envelope) in an accessible place in the classroom. Instruct students to write (on their index card) the name of the item (from the list) that they would most like to have for the classroom. Let students place their cards in the "ballot box."
4. After the students vote, tabulate the results, noting the top two (or three, if desired) choices. Write the name and/or draw an icon of these choices on two (or three) index cards, then affix the cards to each of two (or three) cans. Be sure students cannot view contents. Display the cans in a prominent, accessible (yet secure) place in the classroom. (The top of the teacher's desk is a good place.)
5. At this time announce that the students may vote for their favorite item by placing pennies in the can of their choice. Prior to "Election Day" the students may campaign for their choice by using their own time (recess, lunch, before and after school) to create advertising posters or write a speech in support of their choice. They may request the opportunity to display their poster or address the class in their campaign, or challenge students with opposing views to a debate.
6. On Election Day (a specified date usually three or four days following), the polls will close at the end of the school day and the "votes" will be tabulated. All money will be used to purchase the item that receives the most votes. (In general, the money accumulated will NOT be enough to pay for the cost of the item. Additional money may be accessed from classroom fund, PTO, or whatever is customary in your school.)
7. It is not absolutely necessary, but the students may enjoy counting the pennies and putting them into penny rolls. This is also an excellent opportunity to integrate a math lesson on graphing.
8. It is the responsibility of the teacher to see that the "winning" item is purchased and brought to school for the class. It is advisable to do this in as timely a manner as possible.

