

CIVICS EXAMPLE LESSON PLAN: CREATING A POLITICAL PLATFORM ON THE BACK OF THE 2010 GULF OIL SPILL

Goals and Objectives

Students will be able to use polling data to construct a strategy for political action. Students will be asked to imagine they are the campaign manager for a candidate running for an open seat in the US senate. This candidate wants to appeal to those concerned by the Gulf Oil Spill of 2010. Students must use polling data to inform the strategy they would recommend to this candidate who needs to create and communicate a political platform to her desired constituency (see CT Council for the Social Studies Content Standard 6.5).

Lesson Overview and Activity

Initiation. Discuss with students the relationship between candidates running for office and the people they hope will elect them. Political platforms are designed to articulate a candidate’s position on issues in a way that appeals to likely voters in the next election. Have students volunteer one or two examples of issues that have inspired political conflict over the last few years.

Development. Demonstrate how to run a search in iPOLL on a given topic by using the topics students volunteered. Show them how to use both the keyword function and the “topic” drop-down menu. Practice locating questions, reading the frequency tables and drawing conclusions about what Americans think on given topics. Point out to students how iPOLL provides them with help on how to cite frequencies they find useful.

Activity. Instruct students to imagine they are political campaign managers for an imaginary candidate. They have been asked to advise this candidate on how her political platform should take into account concerns that have arisen in the wake of the 2010 Gulf Oil Spill. Have students search for polling data regarding this spill. They may want to print questions that would help them formulate statements about what Americans think regarding this issue.

Questions. As students search, ask them to think about the following:

- How much has the average American heard about the oil spill?
- Do Americans approve of President Obama’s handling of the oil spill?
- Do Americans approve of British Petroleum’s handling of the oil spill?
- How do Americans feel that the oil spill will affect the US economy?
- How do Americans feel about the level of federal regulation the US has had for offshore drilling?

Requirements

1. Student knowledge about the basic details of the oil spill.
2. Two class periods, including one where students have at least ½ hour to search for polling questions using iPOLL.

Example Frequency Table

Do you think Barack Obama has been spending too much time, too little time, or the right amount of time dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico?

7%	Too much
51%	Too little
34%	Right amount
8%	Don't know

Source:
CBS News Poll
July 2010

Closure

Ask students to write down five statements about what Americans believe about the oil spill, based on what they have observed in the iPOLL data. As they do so, remind them to create statements that cover different aspects of the oil spill (the government’s handling of it, economic effects, etc.).

Assessment

Assignment: Ask students to write a one-page, single-spaced memo in which they recommend to their boss tactics for talking about the oil spill and policies she might propose in its wake. *Evaluation:* Did the students’ memos mention specific frequencies from polling data found in iPOLL? Did they cite that data appropriately?