

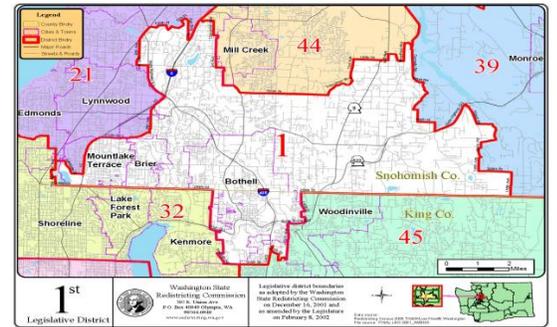
Lesson Plan: Redistricting and Gerrymandering

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Featured resource

[KQED's The Lowdown: Redistricting: How the Maps of Power Are Drawn](#)

[Explainer: Everything You Need To Know About Redistricting](#) (from Change Illinois)



Washington's 1st District/WA Redistricting Commission

Opening quick write prompt:

Imagine dividing your city or town into 5-6 areas with roughly equal numbers of people in each area. What would be the best way to do it? For example, would you use larger streets as borders or rely on areas that already exist, like school enrollment areas or different neighborhoods?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will define redistricting and gerrymandering and analyze how those processes currently function.
- Students will reflect the practice of gerrymandering and reforms to the redistricting process.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

How do redistricting and gerrymandering work? Who should decide how legislative districts are drawn?

Legislative districts are redrawn every 10 years after the census to make sure each district represents roughly the same number of people. It might seem like a boring, bureaucratic process, but it has a tremendous impact on the balance of power. Often, district lines are drawn to favor one political party over another in a process known as **gerrymandering**. When this happens, one political party dominates, making it almost impossible for the opposing party to be elected in that district. In this lesson, students explore the redistricting process and possible reforms to make redistricting less partisan.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Demographics (n.)	Information about the characteristics (age, gender, income, etc.) of a particular group of people
Gerrymander (v.)	To change or manipulate the boundaries of a legislative district to favor one political party over others
Opaque (adj.)	Not clear, hard to understand or explain
Orchestrate (v.)	To organize or plan something, usually something complicated
Redistrict (v.)	To divide into new districts, usually related to an election

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt. Students should focus less on the actual divisions they would make than how they would divide it using roads, landmarks, existing boundaries or other ideas.
- Explain that your town or city is divided into legislative districts with equal populations in the way the quick-write prompt asked. Show a map of the districts in your state and zoom on your city. (Find all state maps [here](#).)
- Ask: What comes to mind when you look at how our state or city is divided? Is it surprising? Do you think any factors besides population led to the districts in their current form?
- As a class, read [The Lowdown post](#), but not the interactive.
- **Check for understanding:** Why do President Obama, Eric Holder and others want to reform the redistricting process? Who do they think should make selections about how district lines are drawn?

Independent practice

- **Redistricting jigsaw:** Divide the class into three groups to jigsaw [the explainer](#) on The Lowdown post. Group 1 will explain why we have legislative districts (Slides 3-9). Group 2 will describe why we redraw legislative districts and how this happens (Slides 10-17). Group 3 will report on the problem of gerrymandering and ways to reform the current system (Slides 18-29). If needed, subdivide the slides further or have more than one of each group.

- Working together, students read the interactive explainer found at the bottom of [The Lowdown post](#) and complete their group’s task.
 - Model the process with the first few slides (Slides 3-5), if needed.

Assessment/reflection

- Each group reports their findings to the whole class to build a common understanding of the issue.
- Students respond to the following questions in a discussion or as a written reflection:
 - How do current practices of redistricting and the issue of gerrymandering affect democracy?
 - Do you think we as a society should pay more attention to the issue of redistricting? Why or why not?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and think-pair-share provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension/homework

Write/speak locally: Students turn their opinions about redistricting into a letter, short speech or presentation, then research ways to make their voice heard in their community. (Example: Speaking during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting on an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out [KQED Learning’s Local Election Toolkit](#).

First 100 Days: Art in the Age of Trump: KQED Arts is accepting submission from artists of all ages for this series. Art of all types (visual, music, dance, poetry) are welcome, and ideally submissions should focus on a specific issue, rather than the appearance or personality of a politician. Find the online submission form [here](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.