

Redistricting in the Classroom



Created for faculty

Why Talk About Redistricting in the Classroom?

Your students may be looking for ways to remain civically engaged and continue building upon all the excitement that surrounded the 2020 election. Redistricting is a perfect topic to channel all of this energy. [2021 signals the beginning of the redistricting process across all 50 states.](#)

As a faculty member, you play a crucial role in bringing attention to this process. Though your students may not be around campus for the full ten years that follow this redistricting cycle, it is up to you to make sure that they stand up for the students that come after them. By bringing attention to this process, you ensure that your district is representative of your students' and institution's interests. You can introduce your students to redistricting by taking 5 minutes of your class time to discuss our [Introduction to Redistricting PowerPoint](#), or by distributing our [Campus and Student Guide to Redistricting](#) resource.

How to Engage Students in Redistricting

There are different avenues for getting students involved, especially in a school setting. Redistricting can be approached from a policy perspective, historical perspective and even through GIS technology. Below you can find ways to help further educate your students.

The Logistics of Redistricting Resources

The following websites can serve as a jumping off point for redistricting conversations in the classroom. They introduce students to state-specific redistricting and reform information and familiarize students with their states' redistricting processes.



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

[National Conference of State Legislatures \(NCSL\)](#)

The National Conference of State Legislatures provides a state by state breakdown of who draws state legislative and congressional lines, redistricting deadlines, the criteria used, public access and input rules and prior redistricting outcomes.

[Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#)

The Princeton Gerrymandering Project (PGP) provides a state by state breakdown of redistricting processes and efforts. They also offer data and coding opportunities, links to open-source software and resources, scholarly work, data and coding collections. Additionally, PGP offers a search portal for students to find organizations in their state that focus on redistricting initiatives.

[All About Redistricting](#)

All About Redistricting is a guide to drawing electoral district lines by Loyola Law School's Professor Justin Levitt. This resource is a one-stop shop for information about statewide redistricting, for state and federal office. It reviews the substantive considerations that go into redistricting, the various entities and institutions involved in the process, and the rules, progress and litigation in each state.

Redistricting Software

Once your students have a better understanding of their state's redistricting process they can draw maps themselves. Websites like Representable, District and MGGG Redistricting Lab provide students with accessible, user-friendly software. Students can use these websites to construct their own congressional and state legislative districts by pulling from prior census metrics and defining their own "communities of interest."

[Representable](#)

Representable is an accessible redistricting open-source software. There is a login required, but no download required. They have a heavy focus on articulating COIs (communities of interest) based on economic and environmental interests, community activities and services, cultural or historical interests and community needs and concerns.

[Districtr](#)

Districtr is an accessible redistricting open-source software. There is no login required and no download required. Its goal is to give people the opportunity to draw their own maps based on COIs (communities of interest) while also introducing users to the basic rules and processes surrounding their state's redistricting process. Districtr provides users with the ability to construct their own congressional and state legislative district maps through easy point and click mapping software.



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

[MGGG Redistricting Lab](#)

Metric Geometry and Gerrymandering Group (MGGG) Redistricting Lab lets students dig more into various statistical analyses and parameters surrounding states' redistricting processes. As compared to the other websites, MGGG Redistricting Lab provides a more academic approach through research reports, data sets and coding.

Redistricting Media Resources

If you want to provide students with a quick overview of the redistricting process and its consequences check out these media resources.

Podcasts

- [The Gerrymandering Project](#)
- [NPR Consider This' "In Many States, 2020 Election Winners Hold All The Redistricting Power"](#)

Videos

- [FiveThirtyEight's "Uh, How Does Gerrymandering Work Again?"](#)
- [Crash Course Government and Politics' "Gerrymandering: Crash Course Government #37"](#)
- [TED-Ed's "Gerrymandering: How drawing jagged lines can impact an election - Christina Greer"](#)
- [Brookings Institute's "Gerrymandering and how to fix it"](#)

Articles

- [Washington Post's "Redistricting, explained"](#)
- [PBS News Hour's "AP analysis shows how gerrymandering benefited GOP in 2016"](#)
- [NPR's "Supreme Court Rules Partisan Gerrymandering Is Beyond The Reach Of Federal Courts"](#)

Games

- [Gerrymander: A Voting District Puzzle Game](#)
- [Gerrymander Madness: The Anti-Democracy VR Game](#)
- [Slate's "Can You Solve Slate's Gerrymandering Jigsaw Puzzle?"](#)
- [MapMaker: The Gerrymandering Game](#)

Lesson Plan



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

- [Simulating Redistricting in the Classroom: A Binding Arbitration Decision Game Using Louisiana Census Data](#)

Engaging Students in Advocacy

While conversations in the classroom can spread awareness about redistricting, your students may be looking to get more involved in the process. Here are some ways for students to engage with the redistricting process at all levels of government.

Contacting State Representatives

Each newly redistricted map needs to be passed as state law. This means that any map is subject to approval by both state legislatures and then the governor. There will be a period between the introduction of the new map as a bill and its final vote. This is when your students should reach out to your state representatives to discuss concerns and ask questions. Students can also check out our [State Elections Guide](#) to learn more about state positions and their impact.

Questions:

- How do you plan on ensuring statewide redistricting efforts remain transparent/nonpartisan?
- If I have personal testimony/district maps I would like to submit for consideration in the redistricting process, who should I send those to?
- It is my opinion that my community of interest has not been accurately reflected in the district maps as they stand right now, what can be done to fix that?

Contacting Local Representatives

Your students should contact local representatives because the local redistricting process determines school districts, city council districts and fire wards. The local redistricting process is much like the state process, but on a smaller scale. Encourage your students to reach out to these officials to talk about any concerns or questions they have about your locality's redistricting process. Students can also check out our [Local Elections Guide](#) to learn more about local positions and their impact.

Questions:

- How do you plan on ensuring the local redistricting process remains transparent and/or nonpartisan?
- Do you plan on having a public comment period once the local maps are drawn? If not, is there any possibility of creating one?
- What can I do to ensure my community is accurately represented in the local redistricting process?



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

- I would like to send in my own map/community of interest for consideration in the local redistricting process, what would be the best way to do that?

Contacting U.S. Congressional Representatives

The only way to achieve sweeping, nationwide redistricting reform to pass into law is through the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate. Encourage your students to reach out to their federal representatives to discuss the possibility of this type of legislation and/or to find out where they stand on redistricting.

Questions:

- I am concerned about gerrymandering in my state and its impact on my community. Is there any way that you would support or introduce a bill supporting fair redistricting reform?
- If there was a redistricting reform bill introduced that supported independent commissions would you support it? Why or why not?
- If there was a redistricting reform bill introduced that protected communities of interest would you support it?
- Would you ever consider supporting or building on the [Voting Rights Act](#) as it concerns redistricting efforts?

Other Ways to Get Involved

- If a redistricting commission exists in your state, encourage students to attend a public meeting. The schedules for these meetings are usually posted on the state legislature's website.
 - If students create a map through some of the software recommended under "Redistricting Software," encourage them to send their map and a brief statement to their elected officials.
 - Students also have the ability to volunteer for nonpartisan redistricting groups such as [Redistricting Data Hub](#). Redistricting Data Hub is willing to work with faculty who want to incorporate data into their class. The [League of Women Voters](#) is another volunteer opportunity.
 - Encourage students to write a letter to the editor. This is a great way for students to publicly define their communities of interest and explain how redistricting impacts them.
-
-



CAMPUS ELECTION ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

About Us

Campus Election Engagement Project (CEEP) is a national nonpartisan project that helps administrators, faculty, staff and student leaders at America's institutions of higher education engage students in federal, state and local elections. CEEP views voting as a means to promote a more equitable and inclusive democracy and to address past and present disenfranchisement. To learn more, visit campuselect.org or contact us at info@campuselect.org.