Scientific Polls vs. Unscientific Polls

Time Frame: 1 (50-minute) class period	**Author:** Justin Jacobek, Morton West High School jjacobek@jsmorton.org

Proven Practices
✓ **Use of current & controversial issues**   ✓ **Direct Instruction**   ✓ **Service Learning (if creating a poll)**

IL Social Studies Standards & Civics Standards	CCSS/ELA History/Social Studies Standards
SS.IS.5.9-12: Identify evidence that draws information from multiple sources to revise or strengthen claims. **SS.IS.7.9-12:** Articulate explanations and arguments to a targeted audience in diverse settings **SS.CV.6.9-12:** Describe how political parties, the media, and public interest groups both influence and reflect social and political interests **SS.CV.5.9-12:** Analyze the impact of personal interest and diverse perspectives on the application of civic dispositions, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.	**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5** Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Essential Question: How can I determine if the results of a poll are reliable?	**Supporting Questions** ● Which polling data is most reliable? ● What is the difference between 'scientific' and 'unscientific' polls? ● When polling results should be reported? ● How can polling results be misinterpreted or misrepresented? ● How does Illinois public opinion match national public opinion on a topic?

Resources Required	Recommended Procedures (Jigsaw)
1. Article: ***20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About A Poll*** 2. Possible guided questions to foster discussion amongst the groups 3. Suggested sites for sample polls: Paul Simon Institute Roper Center	1. Direct Instruction on polling/types of polling should occur the day prior to this lesson 2. Begin class with a Bell-Ringer based on video: *Does Public Opinion Matter?* (6 mins.) 3. Distribute article: *20 Questions A Journalist Should Ask About A Poll* (2 mins) **preferably students should read this on their own the night before or have digital access to this article*

IllinoisCivics.org is your leading resource for information and materials to support teaching of the required high school civics course in Illinois.

[Pew Research](#)	4. Discuss as a class which questions seem more important than other when determining the reliability of the polling data (5 mins)
	5. Discuss factors that may interfere with the accuracy of the polling data. (5 mins)
	6. Break students into groups of 3-4 (2 mins)
	7. Distribute sample polls to each group for analysis (2 mins) *If this lesson is part of a Legislative Semester, students should be in their groups based on their bills. For Step 7, students should find a poll related to their bill on one of the suggested sites*
	8. Each group should apply the *20 Questions* to their poll. In what ways does the poll meet the *20 Questions*? In what ways could the poll/data be improved? (20 mins)
	9. Groups share out to class to discuss commonalities with the polls. (15 mins)
	10. Explain follow-up/extended lesson on creating a poll related to topic.

Possible Extensions
- o If conducted in a Legislative Simulation class, students may be asked to conduct a poll on their particular issue or legislative proposal.
- o Groups may be assigned to report out on their findings.
- o Discussion on which polling sites we find to be the most reliable.
- o Students can use the [Roper Center](#) to track how public opinion on a particular topic has changed over the years.
- o This lesson can be connected to US History, and students may be asked to explain historical factors that have led to a shift in public opinion on these topics

Differentiation
- o Advanced students may be asked to create their own poll on a topic/issue that is important to them. Using the *20 Questions* as a guide
- o If classes need the extra support, perhaps I may distribute sample polls rather than having the students find their own on the suggested sites
- o Deliberation can occur as a class. If technology allows, groups can showcase their polls to the class and debrief on their findings to the whole class.
- o For struggling readers, I may ask only that students research and provide one example of a 'scientific/reliable' poll, and one example of an 'unscientific/unreliable' poll.

Possible Assessments
- in class deliberation
- student-created poll
- *20 Questions* check