

How to Caucus 101

Recommended Grade Levels: 4th, 5th Grade

Estimated Activity Length: 20-30 minutes

Iowa Core Social Studies Standards

4th Grade: SS.4.7., SS.4.8., SS.4.10., SS.4.23.

5th Grade: SS.5.7., SS.5.8., SS.5.9., SS.5.11., SS.5.12., SS.5.20.

Activity Overview

Students will learn about the unique history of the Iowa caucuses, and they will participate in a mock Republican and Democratic caucus using popular superheroes as candidates to learn each electoral process.

What is a caucus?

A caucus is a meeting of people who are members of a political party, and they select representatives to important positions. These positions are called delegates. Not all political parties caucus the same way. In Iowa, a Republican caucus uses ballots. A Democratic caucus requires people to physically move their bodies in a room to show support for a candidate, multiple rounds can occur and a headcount is taken.

Iowa Caucus History

1968	The Democratic National Convention of 1968 was held in Chicago, Illinois. As delegates arrived to nominate a Democratic Party presidential candidate, thousands of protesters swarmed the streets to rally against the Vietnam War and the unfair, inequitable nature of politics in America. This leads to a complete rethinking of the nomination process rules.
1972	In 1972, Iowa became the first state in the nation to hold its Democratic caucus, and it had the first Republican caucus four years later. "Uncommitted" and Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine received the largest share of delegates.
1976	Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter used the momentum from the Iowa caucuses (he finished 2nd) to propel his campaign to the nomination and presidency. It also was the first time the Republican caucuses occurred on the same day (besides straw poll).
2008	The historic race between Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and a slew of other Democrats drew out nearly 240,000 Iowans, shattering previous turnout records.
2012	Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum won the 2012 Iowa caucuses, but 16 days late. Republican candidates Mitt Romney and Santorum were in a close race for victory, with Romney first being announced the winner, but upon review, Santorum came in first.

Instructions

Republican Mock Caucus (Ballot)

To make things easier and to compare the different processes, the Democratic Mock Caucus uses the same superhero candidates as the Republican Mock Caucus.

- 1 Meet the candidates.** This mock caucus activity focuses on superheroes. The recommended superhero candidates are: Batman, Black Panther, Captain America, Captain Marvel, Hulk, Spiderman and Wonder Woman.
- 2 Vote.** Each student will receive a copy of the [Republican Mock Caucus ballot](#). Take a few minutes for the students to silently vote for **ONE** of their preferred candidate. Have them fold their ballots in half.
- 3 Collect.** After everyone is done voting, collect the ballots from the students.
- 4 Count the votes.** You or a student can count the votes. Whichever candidate receives the most votes, wins the Republican caucus. If there is a tie for first, you can have students vote again between the two top candidates. You can tally the votes on the [Caucus Math page](#).

Instructions continued on the next page

How to Caucus 101

Instructions continued

Democratic Mock Caucus

To make things easier and to compare the different processes, the Democratic Mock Caucus uses the same superhero candidates as the Republican Mock Caucus.

- 1 Meet the candidates.** This mock caucus activity focuses on superheroes. The recommended superhero candidates are: Batman, Black Panther, Captain America, Captain Marvel, Hulk, Spiderman and Wonder Woman.
- 2 Select delegates and determine viability.** Each caucus location is allotted a number of delegates based on previous turnout. Your classroom (caucus) has been given **4 delegates** today. Each candidate needs a certain number of people in support of them to be “viable,” which means they would move to the second round. Use the [worksheet](#) with your class to find out the viability threshold (*15 percent of caucus participants, always round number up*). Make sure students understand that a specific number of students is needed per superhero to make sure they move onto the 2nd round.
- 3 Candidate locations.** Democratic caucuses require people to move around the room. Each candidate will require a space for supporters to gather during the moving time. Put up signs around the space with the candidates’ names so students know where to go.
- 4 Move.** Students will need to choose which superhero they like the best from the provided list. Allow students 60 seconds to move to their favorite superhero’s designated location in the room.
- 5 Check viability.** Walk around the room to tally the first round numbers. Determine and explain to students which superheroes are not viable for the next round (do not meet the 15 percent threshold).
- 6 Support your candidate.** Before beginning the second round, have each viable candidate group choose one spokesperson to speak about their candidate. Allow each candidate’s spokesperson 60 seconds to try and convince others to join their group.
- 7 Second round.** The students that chose superheroes that are not viable after the first round will need to move to a viable superhero during the second round. These students will have 60 seconds to join another viable group or they can create a “Super Group” with the other people who didn’t have enough support to be viable. The students that selected a viable candidate in the first round do not move in this round.
- 8 Caucus math.** Using the [worksheet](#), find out the number of delegates each superhero receives after the two rounds of caucusing.
- 9 Questions to Spark Learning**
 - Iowa has been called “first in the nation” when it comes to selecting presidential candidates. What does do you think that means?
 - Why do you think it is important or significant to be the first state to choose? Are there any drawbacks?
 - Do you think Iowa should remain first in the nation when it comes to the presidential nomination process?
- 10 Additional Resources**
 - [Iowa Caucuses 101 - Past History Alive Google Slide Presentation](#)
 - [Iowa Votes - Republican Caucus Tutorial](#)
 - [Iowa Votes - Democratic Caucus Tutorial](#)

Caucus 101 Worksheet

Democratic Mock Caucus

Your caucus location has been given **4 delegates** that will be selected today.

How to Determine a Candidate's Viability

Let's find how many people are needed per superhero for that person to be counted (viable).

- What is the total # of students participating in the activity? _____
- Take the total # of participating students $\times 0.15 =$ _____
That number is the required number of students required for a candidate to remain viable. For example, if there are 23 students participating, you would multiply $23 \times 0.15 = 3.45$. If a decimal, always round the number up. So, for a candidate to be viable, four students must support that candidate.
- How many students are needed for a candidate to be viable? _____ (viability threshold)

1st Round of the Democratic Mock Caucus

After the 1st round, how many students are at each of the superhero locations?

Candidate Name	Total Number of Students	Is this candidate viable?
Batman		
Black Panther		
Captain America		
Captain Marvel		
Hulk		
Spiderman		
Wonder Woman		

2nd Round of the Democratic Mock Caucus

After the 2nd round, how many students are at each of the superhero locations?

Candidate Name	Total Number of Students	Is this candidate viable?
Batman		
Black Panther		
Captain America		
Captain Marvel		
Hulk		
Spiderman		
Wonder Woman		
Super Group (Combined Candidates)		

Caucus Math Time

Following the second round, it is time to figure out how many of the four delegates each viable candidate receives. Here is how to find divide the delegates:

Total # of delegates (4) \times # of people supporting that superhero
DIVIDED BY
of total amount of people participating in caucus

Example

4 (total # of delegates) \times 6 (# of people supporting Wonder Woman)

23 (total # of people participating in the caucus)

(Divided)

= 1.043 (round down to 1)

Wonder Woman receives 1 of the 4 available delegates

Your answer will be the number of delegates that each superhero receives after caucusing.

Democratic Mock Caucus Delegate Count

How many of the 4 total delegates did each of the viable candidates receive?

Candidate Name	Total Delegates
Batman	
Black Panther	
Captain America	
Captain Marvel	
Hulk	
Spiderman	
Wonder Woman	
Super Group	

Compare Democratic and Republican Mock Caucus Results

Republican Mock Caucus Results

Candidate Name	Total Votes
Batman	
Black Panther	
Captain America	
Captain Marvel	
Hulk	
Spiderman	
Wonder Woman	

Democratic Mock Caucus Results

Candidate Name	Total Delegates
Batman	
Black Panther	
Captain America	
Captain Marvel	
Hulk	
Spiderman	
Wonder Woman	

Republican Mock Caucus Ballots

Below are ballots that be printed, cut and distributed to students to vote in the Republican mock caucus.

<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman	<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman
<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman	<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman
<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman	<p>You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the circle of only ONE superhero name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Batman<input type="radio"/> Black Panther<input type="radio"/> Captain America<input type="radio"/> Captain Marvel<input type="radio"/> Hulk<input type="radio"/> Spiderman<input type="radio"/> Wonder Woman