

Title: The ABC's of Apportionment

Sub-Strand F—Spatial Organization

Standard: The student will explain how the regionalization of space into political units affects human behavior.

Benchmark 4: Students will evaluate a map of proposed voting districts according to the criteria of clarity, size, and compactness that districts are supposed to meet.

Grade Level:

9-12 only for the high school course.

Overview: A look at apportionment and redistricting, including the latest Census 2000 national map. This map includes which states were the biggest gainers and losers of the most recent Census. Students analyze map and select additional states for more in-depth inquiry.

Time: Three 55-minute class periods, depending on whether or not you have to review “apportionment” with your students.

Subjects: Human Geography, Civics or American Government.

Required Materials:

1. Internet access.
2. A blank map of the U.S. for each student.
3. **Attachment 1** copy for each student.

Objectives: Students will understand the concepts of apportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering. Students will analyze current apportionment data against previous data.

Suggested Procedure:

Day One – Review key terms, such as *apportionment*, *redistricting* and *gerrymandering*. To begin, students will need to access the Census Bureau homepage at <http://www.census.gov/>. From there, **click** on, “[Your Gateway to Census 2000](#)” Under the “Census 2000 Data Releases” column, **click** once more on the heading, “[Congressional Apportionment](#) “ and have students read through the introductory section which answers basic questions about apportionment. If your students already have a good understanding of what apportionment is all about, you can skip this section and go on to **Day Two**. However, to gauge your student’s ability, you may want to pre-test them using any/all of the twenty questions found on the Census Bureau’s webpage (which comes with answers) before you move on. The intent of the first day is to get everyone on the same page regarding:

- a. what the key terms mean

- b. how often apportionment occurs
- c. the reasons for apportionment
- d. a brief history of apportionment in the U.S.

For additional perspective on the most recent trend in redistricting, I'd refer you to the article, *Partisan Politics in the 2000 U.S. Census*, by Kenneth Prewitt. This article is found on the Population Reference Bureau site (<http://www.prb.org/>), **click** on Census 2000 from the homepage under "Topics" and then scroll down to the article.

Day Two – Students will make a choropleth map of the 2000 census data from the information found in Table 1 (Apportionment Population and Number of Representatives, by State: Census 2000.) I'd suggest that it is easiest to print off the table for them ahead of time, or they can access it directly at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/apportionment.html>

Suggestion For the legend, choose a neutral color for the states that stayed the same, and then use another color for the gainers (you'll need two shades of the same color – i.e., Light blue/dark blue = +1 and +2) and use another color for the losers (again, two shades; one for -1 and one for -2. See the completed map at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/map03.pdf> .

NOTE – Since the maps are already completed on the website, you may decide to skip having the students create the map, and just analyze what is on-line; but I think it is good practice for students to generate their own choropleth maps from data sets.

After students have made the map or are simply looking at the on-line version, have them analyze what they see. The following questions may help guide the discussion or you can generate your own:

- a. Study the map, is there a pattern as to what regions the "losers" represent? If so, what explanation would you give for this pattern?
- b. Likewise, is there a regional pattern of the "gainers?" If so, how would you explain it?
- c. Look next at the states that stayed the same – any ideas as to why there was no change?
- d. Consider what you know about the population shift in the U.S. over the last 200 years (generally westward and a bit south) – is there evidence to support this shift in the 2000 Census map?
- e. Look at the number of Representative seats held by each state. List the Top 5 states, in order from the most to the least. How many states have only 1 Representative?
- f. Consider how many people are represented by each Representative in the different states. For example, if California has a population of 33,930,798 and 53 Representatives, then each Representative represents 640,204 people. Whereas, in South Carolina the population is 4,025,061 and they have 6 Representatives, or each one represents 670,844 people. Consider Montana, 1 Representative for 905,316 people; or Wyoming, with 1 Representative for 495,304 people. Is this fair? If so, why? If not, why not?

- g. What ideas can you think of to modify the current system?
- h. How does Minnesota rate regarding the number of people for each Representative? (1 Representative for each 615,709 people)

Day Three – Compare and contrast different states historically. Students can work in groups or individually. You can assign states or they can choose their own. Have students pick X number of states (five, with one of them Minnesota? . . .five, from different regions of the country , etc. . .) Go Back to the Census Bureau website on the Apportionment page

(<http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/apportionment.html>) and select different states under “historical charts” to look at. Have the students complete

Attachment 1 from the data they collect on their states.

Suggested Assessment: Traditional multiple choice test or give them a data set to map and then analyze regarding apportionment.

RESOURCES

National Geography Standards:

HUMAN SYSTEMS:

STANDARD 9: The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

STANDARD 10: The characteristics, distributions, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

STANDARD 12: The process, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

STANDARD 13: How forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.

Supplemental Web Links for Teachers and Students:

<http://www.census.gov/> U.S. Census Bureau homepage – Premier site – has access to Census 2000 tables and maps, as well as international data, online mapping and much, much more.

<http://www.prb.org/> Population Reference Bureau homepage – another “must see” site – it has great articles and data sets.

<http://server.admin.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=2023> Minnesota Planning site with a link to a fact sheet on reapportionment and redistricting, done by Tom Gillaspay, Minnesota State Demographer. It is an interesting report as it pertains specifically to MN, however to actually view the map

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