

OVERVIEW

Students will use the Roper Center Web Site to learn about public opinion data. Working in small groups, students will research different aspects of the art and science of polling. Presentations will be made to deliver a complete picture of the effort and the cautions one should consider when using polls.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE

Fundamental ability to navigate the Internet, keyboarding skills.

DELIVERABLES

Presentations by each group will provide a broad view of the work of polls.

MATERIALS

You will need a computer with Internet access, word processor.

You will find the information you need from this website:

www.RoperCenter.Cornell.edu

This is a starting place; feel free to search the Internet for other related information.

PART I—TEACHER INITIATED

Review the **INTRODUCTORY SECTION** on POLLING101 aloud with the class.



- POLLING101: Fundamentals Of Public Opinion Polling
<https://www.ropercenter.cornell.edu/polling-and-public-opinion/polling-fundamentals>

POSSIBLE TEACHER DEMONSTRATION

To demonstrate the technique of sampling—how a sample can represent the population—consider the M&M candy demonstration. Supplies: 2 large bags of M&Ms placed into a clear jar. Have one person in each of the six groups grab a handful of about 50 candies and place them

onto a paper plate. They should then separate, count and chart the number and percent of candies of each color. Then have someone (or do this ahead of time) do the same for the full “universe” of M&Ms in the jar and compare the proportions. They should be within a “sampling error.”

Remember: If you don't believe in sampling, the next time you go for a blood test, tell them to 'take it all.'

PART II—STUDENT ACTIVITY

- ▣ Divide the class into 6 groups. Browse the educational sections of the Roper Center's web site. Locate the sections on POLLING101
- ▣ Assign each group one of the subtopics in POLLING101

POLLING101: Fundamentals of Public Opinion Polling

<https://www.ropercenter.cornell.edu/polling-and-public-opinion/polling-fundamentals>

1. Sampling
 2. Total Survey Error
 3. Understanding the numbers presented in tables
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- ▣ **Dig Deeper:**

4. Criteria for Assessing Quality
5. Interpreting Results within Context
6. Design of the Questions

ASSIGNMENT

Take your time, and read through the information provided (web links provided, as well as others). As a group discuss the meaning of each area. You will need to obtain a clear understanding of the topic assigned to your group in order to then train the rest of the class on that section of polling. Copy and paste text into a word document, take notes and prepare an oral report for your fellow students. Be sure to reference the sources of all information copied in your notes.

CRITICAL THINKING:

Vox Populi means Voice of the People. How does polling contribute to our democratic form of government? What other ways is the voice of the people heard?