How to Caucus 101

Activity Overview: Since 1972, Iowans have gathered together in living rooms and school gymnasiums to voice their opinions regarding political candidates through a process called caucusing. This Innovative Iowan activity focuses on the unique Iowa caucus process and has young historians participating in their own mock caucus to select their favorite superheroes.

Connection to Iowa History

In 1972, Senator George McGovern gained national attention when he came out on top of the Iowa caucuses. In 1975, candidate Jimmy Carter came in second place in the Iowa caucuses. Carter used the momentum to become the Democratic Party's nominee, and eventually, the president of the United States. After that, the Iowa caucus attracted national attention as candidates from both parties flocked to the state to make their case to Iowa voters in local cafes, church basements, and similar venues. The winner of the Iowa caucus doesn't always become the party's candidate, but a poor showing in Iowa often leads candidates to withdraw.

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, republicans use ballots. Democrats physically move their bodies in a room and a headcount is taken.

Instructions *(Video Instructions Available)*

Republican Mock Caucus

1 **Meet the Candidates.** This mock caucus activity focuses on superheroes. The superhero candidates are: Batman, Black Panther, Captain America, Captain Marvel, Hulk, Spiderman and Wonder Woman

2 **Print and Cut.** Before starting this activity, print the republican mock caucus ballots included in the attached worksheet. Cut out each ballot and set aside.

3 **Select a Leader.** Select someone to be the leader for this activity. This person will hand out, gather and count the ballots.

4 **Vote.** The leader will hand out a copy of the attached republican caucus ballot to everyone participating in the activity. Take a few moments for everyone to silently select their one preferred candidate on the paper. They will then fold the paper to cover their vote.

5 **Collect.** The person that handed out the ballots will then recollect the ballots.

6 **Count the Votes.** The leader will count the votes. Whichever candidate receives the most votes, wins the Republican caucus.

Instructions continued on next page

Materials

- Pencil/Pen
- Iowa Caucus Worksheet
- Scissors
- Printer

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Democratic Mock Caucus

1. **Meet the Candidates.** This mock caucus activity focuses on superheroes. The superhero candidates are: Batman, Black Panther, Captain America, Captain Marvel, Hulk, Spiderman and Wonder Woman

2. **Print.** Before starting the activity, print the attached worksheet. The instructions for this activity are on the first two pages.

3. **Select a Leader.** Select someone to be the leader for this activity. This person will complete the worksheet to assist with this activity.

4. **Select Delegates.** Each caucus location is allotted a number of delegates. In order to make this activity work, you will need a group of 4 or more people. For this activity, your group has 4 delegates.

5. **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 people know where to stand to support their candidate.

6. **Move.** After reviewing the candidate list, people will need to choose which superhero they like the best. Allow people 60 seconds to move to their favorite superhero's designated location in the room.

7. **Becoming Viable.** Candidates require a certain number of people to remain "viable" to move to the second round. Use the attached worksheet to find what is viable for your group. Which superheroes are still viable for the second round? Which ones are not?

8. **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.

9. **Second Round.** The people that chose candidates that are not viable after the first round will need to move to a viable candidate during the second round. These people 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. If you are in a group that is viable in the first round, you cannot move and switch candidates.

10. **Caucus Math.** Using the attached worksheet, find out the number of delegates each superhero receives after the two rounds of caucusing.

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11 **Questions to Spark Learning**
- The democratic and republican caucus process are very different. Describe the pros and cons of both processes.
- Do you think it is important to be the first state to choose and voice their choice? Why? Are there any drawbacks?
- Do you think Iowa should remain first in the nation for selecting presidential candidates?

Additional Resources
12 If your young historian would like to learn more about this topic, explore these additional resources below.
- State Historical Society of Iowa - Primary Source Set: Caucuses and Elections
- Des Moines Public Library - The Iowa Caucuses
- Office of the Iowa Secretary of State - Elections 101
- Iowa PBS - The Iowa Caucus

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Democratic Caucus Worksheet

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

What is the total # of people participating in the activity? _____

Take the total # of participating people x .15 = _____

That number is the required number of people required for a candidate to remain viable.

How many people are required to choose a candidate in order to be viable? _____

First Round of the Caucus
After the first round, how many people are at each of the superhero locations?

Candidate Name	Total Number of People	Is This Candidate Viable?
Batman		
Black Panther		
Captain America		
Captain Marvel		
Hulk		
Spiderman		
Wonder Woman		

Second Round of the Caucus
After the second round, how many people are at each of the superhero locations?

Candidate Name	Total Number of People	Is This Candidate Viable?
Batman		
Black Panther		
Captain America		
Captain Marvel		
Hulk		
Spiderman		
Wonder Woman		

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Caucus Math Time

Following the second round, it is time to figure out how many of the 4 delegates each candidate will receive. Here is how to divide the delegates:

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

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

Delegate Count

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

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

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Republican Caucus Ballots

You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the square of the name of only **ONE** superhero.

☐ Batman ☐ Hulk

☐ Black Panther ☐ Spiderman

☐ Captain America ☐ Wonder Woman

☐ Captain Marvel

You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the square of the name of only **ONE** superhero.

☐ Batman ☐ Hulk

☐ Black Panther ☐ Spiderman

☐ Captain America ☐ Wonder Woman

☐ Captain Marvel

You are choosing the best superhero of the candidates listed below. Please fill in the square of the name of only **ONE** superhero.

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☐ Captain Marvel

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☐ Captain Marvel