Get Involved

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Marist College in New York, Monmouth University in New Jersey, Suffolk University in Massachusetts and Quinnipiac University in Connecticut are not big names in academia — unless you are talking about political polls.

As Nick Anderson reports in “Tiny schools rank among polling’s biggest names,” for these schools polling “yields a marketing bonanza akin to what others reap through college football games or the NCAA basketball tournament.”

Suggested activities and Post reprints in this resource guide build on this backstory, the methodology of polling and the analysis of the results.

Four Tom Toles editorial cartoons reflect different opinions about the candidates and campaign 2016.

Teachers are provided “notes” to guide the three “Think Like a Reporter: Use Primary Sources” activities.

See what questions and answers your students have as they get involved.
Poll. It is the result of an election. Voters go to polling places. Another meaning is both a noun and a verb: Pollsters ask the same question or a series of questions of people to learn what they are thinking at that time about events, issues and candidates. A poll is also the compilation of those answers.

Universities, media companies and specialized organizations conduct polls, gather and evaluate poll results and disseminate the results. Many candidates conduct their own polls to gather voter attitudes towards particular events, positions, government programs — and even themselves.

The Washington Post in conjunction with SurveyMonkey conducted a national political poll. Review the methodology that was used. Read and discuss “How The Washington Post-SurveyMonkey 50-state poll was conducted.”


View the introductory video, “50-state Poll.” It is narrated by Chris Cillizza, The Fix columnist.

1. What is in the background of his narrative?
2. In what way do the maps add to viewer understanding of poll results?
3. What information was helpful to you before reading the longer article?
Many times informational graphics provide data in easier-to-comprehend form. After discussing the results, evaluate the type of graphic used to illustrate the data. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/50-state-poll/]

*The Washington Post* states the “survey’s extraordinary size, including more than 74,000 interviews in the month of August and into September, provides a rare opportunity to compare voters’ opinions on the 2016 campaign in each of 50 states, from the competitive election battlegrounds to the dozens of heavily blue and red states where attitudes are rarely measured in statewide surveys.”

1. In small groups, explore different ways to compare and contrast the responses. Among blue states and among red states and between regions.
2. Are the explanations of survey results clear to you?
3. Do third party candidates have a potential to influence election results?
4. Select a demographic group. What do poll results indicate about their voter preferences?

After considering the reasons that polls are conducted, learning about the methodology and changing ways to take polls, and reading the results and analyses of a 50-state poll, answer the following questions:

1. Do you think the number of people who responded was large enough?
2. What poll question(s) did you find most interesting? Explain your response.
3. In what ways do the people (age, economic and education levels, employment) who are polled change results?
4. Do you think learning poll results influences people to change their minds? Or are minds influenced more by facts and convincing arguments?
5. What value is there in knowing what the public thinks in response to questions on a political poll? To candidates? To the public?

The Post-SurveyMonkey survey gave *The Post* an opportunity to gauge political attitudes on a far greater scale than would have been financially and practically feasible using traditional, probability-based polling. At the same time, *The Post* remains committed to continuing its long-trusted probability surveys, including those conducted with partners including ABC News, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the University of Maryland. These have a sterling record for methodological rigor and accuracy and will be critical for evaluating the utility of newer methodologies going forward.

**Read new polls about the 2016 election.**

1. Has a significant shift in public opinion about candidates taken place from the August-early September 50-state poll?
2. Has any state changed more than five-percent preference from one candidate to another?
3. Do polls taken after the debates between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump indicate shifts in opinion?
4. To what extent should polls be valued? Before answering this question, go to the Poll section on [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Scroll through the headlines to get an overview of previous poll results.
Tom Toles | Campaign 2016

Campaigns provide editorial cartoonists many opportunities to make visual commentary on the candidates’ speeches, actions and off-the-cuff remarks. Campaign 2016 was an exceptionally plentiful year for Washington Post editorial cartoonist Tom Toles.

July 15, 2016  The New ‘Locoman Go’

July 22, 2016  A Big Circus

For each cartoon, Toles’ alter ego appears in the lower right corner to emphasize the word play, satirize actions, expand the image or add another dimension to his point of view. “Read” each political cartoon before answering the questions. >>>

August 5, 2016  Target Voter

August 24, 2016  Yet More Hillary Emails
1. Who is the main figure in the cartoon? What details confirm this?
2. Toles combines two happenings to make his commentary. What are the two contemporary references?
3. Who are the “imaginary enemies”?
4. Toles enjoys word play. What word play does he use? How does this re-enforce his point of view?

July 22, 2016

1. What iconic symbols are used to identify the individuals? Name each symbol and who is represented.
2. To what does “big tent” refer?
3. Toles uses word play to express his point of view. Read the ringmaster's top hat. What is Toles' perspective?
4. What does the alter ego’s comment add to Toles’ image and commentary?

August 5, 2016

1. Toles uses a Q&A approach in this political cartoon. Rewrite the question in your own words.
2. What does “chump” mean?
3. What is a “target audience”? Who is each presidential candidate targeting for votes?
4. Calligraphy and a short name work together to make this visual commentary work. Can you think of a business or candidate that could be used backwards or upside down to convey an attitude?

August 24, 2016

1. What iconic symbols are used to identify the two figures?
2. Explain the “equipment” that both come ready to use?
3. Why are leaves an effective metaphor for the Clinton email disclosures?
4. Do recent headlines support the predicted windfall of email disclosures?
Mr. Trump’s targets

IT’S USEFUL that Donald Trump has clarified his plans for Larissa Martinez, who started classes this week as a freshman at Yale University, having graduated in the spring as class valedictorian at her Texas high school. After weeks of waffling, and suggestions that his views on immigration might be “softening,” Mr. Trump has set the record straight: Ms. Martinez has no future in America.

The recipient of a full scholarship to Yale, Ms. Martinez is hoping for a career as a neurosurgeon. As it happens, she’s also a top-notch student, a compelling public speaker and, according to Mr. Trump’s policy, a high priority for deportation.

Discarding his dalliance with fairness and compassion, the Republican presidential nominee this week tossed red meat to the xenophobes in his base by reaffirming his intention to launch a crusade of mass deportations that would target, according to an analysis by The Post, at least 6 million people. Among them, he said, would be immigrants who have overstayed their visas. That category would sweep up Ms. Martinez, who, at age 13, accompanied her mother and sister to the United States on a tourist visa; they stayed after the visa expired, having fled an abusive home in Mexico.

Of course, there is no place in Mr. Trump’s cramped mental universe for someone like Ms. Martinez. To Mr. Trump and the crowds who egg him on, undocumented immigrants are criminals, murderers, rapists, carriers of disease and drug smugglers, fit to be rounded up by deportation agents and shipped far, far away.

Just why Mr. Trump would prioritize visa-overstayers for deportation, and not those who entered the country illegally in the first place, is unexplained. Logic is hardly the point of his policy. He asserts that illegal immigrants have stolen jobs from Americans and triggered a crime wave. In fact, they have met a labor market demand for low-wage workers and been a catalyst for economic growth.

While there are undoubtedly instances of terrible crimes committed by unauthorized immigrants — as there are by authorized immigrants, and green card holders, and, it goes without saying, citizens — they are hardly the rule. In fact, young immigrant males are incarcerated at roughly half the rate of native-born Americans. Illegal immigrants, like legal ones, are generally law-abiding and extremely hard-working.
To the GOP nominee, illegal immigrants are a useful instrument with which to whip his supporters into a froth of nativist agitation. He would hire thousands more immigration and Border Patrol agents; he would create a “special deportation task force”; he would round up the criminals whose countries refuse to accept them. He would do it all on Day One, in the first hour, the first minute, in the first fleeting seconds of his administration — by fiat, presumably, because he makes no reference to Congress or legality or judicial precedent. It will all be so fast, so beautiful, so efficient. Believe him.

The self-contained imposter who called briefly on Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto on Wednesday was masquerading as Donald Trump. In fact, the real Mr. Trump is the man who has been on television all these months, playing on hatred and fear, threatening people such as Ms. Martinez, who represent American values more truly than Mr. Trump ever could.

— September 1, 2016
Use Primary Sources

Original documents and artifacts, eyewitness accounts and public records give evidence of life as it was lived. Historians, business employees and government workers, lawyers and journalists use them to confirm statements, produce documentaries and write reports or articles.

Take a look at the front page of today’s newspaper.
- What catches your attention first? A headline? A photograph? A topic?
- What editors consider the most important stories are placed top-of-the-fold. Are today’s top stories related to government, safety, economics, international happenings or another area?
- Select and read one of the articles. Summarize the content.
- Is the reporter balanced, providing different points of view?
- Locate another article on the same topic published by the same or another news source. Compare the coverage.

Review the kinds of documents listed in the sidebar (right). Were any of these used by The Post’s reporting staff in the first article you read? In the second article you read?

If used, how did they add depth to the article? If not used, which documents might have added more understanding of the topic?

To locate documents, one needs to know the subject of the search and what one already knows. What clarification, confirmation or new information do you need?

Some information can only be discovered through interviews and personal files and albums. However, even family information can be found online: census reports, deeds and sale of property, marriage licenses and military records, for example. Today many documents have been digitized and are available to diligent researchers.
Follow the Money

A developer needs to promote each project to the intended buyer. Donald Trump and the Trump Organization have many international projects — including casinos, golf courses and resorts.

1. What do you know about the need to promote a project?
2. How important are the photographs and illustration to convey the concept?
3. How important are the words selected in press releases and promotional material to capture buyers’ interest?

BRANDING — Trump Ocean Resort Baja, Mexico

Use The Post’s “Trump Revealed: The Reporting Archive” to follow one project — Trump Ocean Resort in Baja, Mexico. Begin by finding and reviewing these promotional pieces.

BRANDING
Baja press release 1: Donald J. Trump and Irongate Announce Plans for Trump Ocean Resort Baja Mexico

BRANDING
Baja press release 2: “Trump Heads to Baja”

BRANDING
Trump site — Baja listed in Real Estate Portfolio: Baja, Mexico

BRANDING
Preview_Kit-Spa_Tower

1. To whom are the press releases, portfolio and sales promotion appealing?
2. How successful do you think these pieces are in getting buyers interested in purchasing a condo or coming for a vacation at the resort?

Continue reading to follow the progress of this project.

- Press release: Condo Hotel for Sale in Rosarito Beach, Baja California Mexico
- Los Angeles Times, March 7, 2009, article: Trump Baja venture leaves buyers high and dry
- The Washington Post, July 23, 2015, article: “How Donald Trump cashes in even when his name-brand properties fail”
- The Law Dictionary, Answer: “How is Donald Trump Able to File for Bankruptcy So Many Times?”
Check Out the University

Whether a 20-year-old or a 50-year-old, one needs to select the place of higher education based one’s career goals, the reputation of the university, placement and success of graduates, and meeting one’s budget.

1. There are for-profit and non-profit universities. What is the difference between them?
2. Name some of the well-known for-profit and non-profit universities. How do you tell which is the best one for your professional goals?
3. What do you know about Trump University?

PROMOTION — Trump University and Its Curriculum

Use The Post’s “Trump Revealed: The Reporting Archive” to find these primary sources. Read the following advertisements to understand the content of the training workshops offered by Trump University.

TRUMP UNIVERSITY
Cohen v Trump Exhibit E part 2 to Forge Declaration

DEPOSITIONS
Trump-Deposition-Trump-University-Lawsuit: Transcription of Clip from Arkansas Rally 2/26/16

TRUMP UNIVERSITY
NY Trump Univ Lawsuit-Exhibits to Snell Affirmation, Vol. 6 of 9

1. What does Trump University promote in its advertising?
2. What professional goals will be met by graduates of Trump University workshops?

Continue reading to follow the success of Trump University and its graduates.

• Trump University Truth | Donald J. Trump For President, March 7, 2016
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgfsbQGPLAE
• The Washington Post, July 13, 2016, article: “Judge attacked by Trump weighs releasing key video in Trump University case”
• National Review, July 16, 2015, article: “Did Donald Trump Run a Scam University?”
A Civics Lesson in Apathy

In Va.’s Manassas Park, 3 council seats are up for election, but there’s only 1 name on the ballot

By Antonio Olivo

Originally Published August 30, 2016

There are three city council seats up for grabs this fall in Manassas Park, an exurb of the nation’s capital facing huge demographic shifts and crushing debt. But only one candidate will be on the ballot.

It is a stark example of the civic apathy that experts say is growing more common in some of America’s smaller cities and towns, even as 24-hour news channels and websites proliferate and one of the most divisive presidential campaigns in history has drawn record crowds to political rallies and primary polling stations.

Civic groups say that shifting demographics and economic pressures make it harder to find qualified people to run for local elections, leaving a hole in what is essentially the ground floor of American democracy.

In small communities nationwide, local governance typically means frequent evening meetings for little or no pay and even less gratitude from constituents. Manassas Park, where many of the 16,000 residents juggle long work hours and lengthy commutes, pays city council members $9,200 per year. The mayor makes $9,800.

“There wasn’t much of a party push” to recruit potential council members, said Manassas Park Mayor Frank Jones, an independent who is seeking a fourth term in office. “I wish we had more announced candidates. I think it caught people by surprise.”

The National League of Cities, an umbrella organization for about 1,600 municipalities, has launched several workshops to try to ramp up political participation at the local level, encouraging leaders to engage constituents online and to draw in more potential candidates by inviting community members to play greater roles in how their tax dollars are spent.

“You start to think about those levers within the community, whether it’s someone who is serving on the PTA or someone who is on a local commission,” said Brooks Rainwater, senior executive for the organization’s City Solutions and Applied Research division. “They would be the ones who would be running for those council seats and running for the local mayor’s position.”

In Manassas Park, about seven people picked up city-issued packets to register as candidates in the Nov. 8 city council race, officials said. Only Democrat Donald Shuemaker followed through, knocking on the doors of the newer two-story homes on one side of town and the aging Cape-Cod-style houses on the other side to collect the 125 ballot signatures required to become a candidate.

Republicans, whose local party committee has been inactive for several years, did not recruit any candidates to run for the seven-member board.

“I joke that it’s good for me if I’m the only candidate, but it’s actually very bad for the city,” said Shuemaker, whose previous experience includes a one-year appointment to the council in 2013 to fill a vacant seat. “You want to have elections that are about bringing the best ideas forward.”

One council seat is open because current member Jeanette Rishell,
a Democrat, is challenging Jones for mayor. Two Republican council members — Vice Mayor Bryan Polk and Keith Miller — chose not to seek reelection.

The vacuum startled William J. Treuting Jr., who was the city’s mayor in the early 2000s and currently chairs the local planning commission. He said he reluctantly decided to mount a write-in campaign for council, worried that there won’t be enough experience on the board to deal with serious challenges facing Manassas Park.

“I kind of see a big need for the city to get re-energized,” said Treuting, who is running in November as an independent and works as a principal security adviser for a software services company in nearby Chantilly. “I hate politics and I hate politicians. I'd much rather be behind my desk working.”

Incorporated as a city in 1975, Manassas Park is eager to shed its image as an aging small town on the lower rung of the region’s middle class.

In recent years, the city took on debt — about $120 million — building new schools and other government buildings in hopes of competing with nearby Prince William County and Manassas City for jobs and shopping attractions.

So far, however, there hasn’t been much economic activity.

A downtown business district sits mostly empty. Bright yellow “For lease” signs hang in the storefronts of a mixed-use development that was meant to lure restaurants and retail stores near a Virginia Railway Express rail station.

A construction team is working on another development that will include 304 apartments and another dozen retail spaces.

Meanwhile, local schools are becoming more crowded with the children of families who have moved to Manassas Park in search of cheaper housing. Many are Latino immigrants working low-wage jobs.

With an annual debt payment of $9 million — about 12 percent of the total operating budget — local leaders are anxious about the possibility of cutting services or raising property taxes beyond the $3,947 per year on average that homeowners are already paying.

Few people, it seems, want to take on those headaches.

“We need more commercial income,” said Talal Hassan, a local developer who briefly considered launching his own write-in campaign for city council. “We need more retail, more office space and more companies.”

But, Hassan added, he doesn’t have time to help figure out how to get there.

“I love the city, in all honesty,” he said. “But my company has tripled in size. It got too busy.”

Latino residents, who now make up nearly 35 percent of the city’s population, are overall less likely to show up to local city council meetings, much less seek political office, officials and leaders in the community say.

“It’s a working-class commuter city,” said Michael Carrera, a Republican and the sole Latino on the city council. “A lot of people who live there are service workers. It’s difficult for many people to be involved.”

Manassas Park officials sought to engage immigrants by hosting a Latino heritage festival in the mid-2000s. But the event was permanently canceled in 2007, when activists seeking stronger U.S. immigration laws threatened to stage a protest there.

Carrera said the lack of interest in the upcoming council election supports an effort he’s championing to reduce the size of the city council to five members.

“A city our size, it’s obvious that we don’t need seven members,” he said. “Also, it would make it more competitive.