



## Lesson: Redistricting

**Overview:** This lesson introduces the concept of redistricting and how it affects representation and elections.

### Student Objectives:

- Become familiar with the process of redistricting
- Discuss the multiple ethical and political decisions involved in the redistricting process

### Vocabulary:

- Redistricting
- Gerrymandering
- Apportionment
- Reapportionment

### Materials:

- *Redistricting 101* handout
- *Redistricting Chicago* handout
- *Chicago's ward remap begins with everyone on alert* article
- Computer and lcd projector (optional)

### Bell-ringer: Journal reflection (5 minutes)

Either show the video found at [www.redistrictinggame.org](http://www.redistrictinggame.org) (approximately 1 minute long) and ask students to respond -- Do you think those statements are true? If so, is that fair?

OR

Have students respond to the following quote:

“As a mapmaker, I can have more of an impact on an election than a campaign ... more of an impact than a candidate. When I, as a mapmaker, have more of an impact on an election than the voters ... the system is out of whack.”

– David Winston, GOP redistricting consultant in 1990

Do you think these statements are true? If so, is that fair?

### Before: Share out (5 minutes)

Have students share their thoughts from the bellringer.

Ask students what map is being referred to in the bellringer? Do they know how voting districts are decided?



### **During: Understanding redistricting (15-20 minutes)**

Divide students into groups of 5 and distribute the *Redistricting 101*. Read the definition of redistricting aloud. Have each group divide sections of the reading amongst the students in their group so that each student is responsible for reading one section and explaining it to the rest of their group.

Assess student understanding by asking the bolded questions on the handout and having students answer the questions briefly in their own words.

### **After: Redistricting Chicago (10 minutes)**

Distribute the *Redistricting Chicago* handout and have students complete.

Debrief the *Redistricting Chicago* handout:

1. Was the decision of whether which baseball team stayed in Chicago up to voters, the aldermen or you, the redistricting expert?
2. For those fans who were the minority in their new wards, were their voices heard? How might their voices have more impact if the lines were drawn differently?

### **Closer: Explain homework (2 minutes)**

Distribute the *Chicago's Ward Remap Begins with Everyone on Alert* article from the Chicago Tribune (available at [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-07-14/news/ct-met-city-council-redraw-wards-20110714\\_1\\_ward-remap-ward-boundaries-aldermen](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-07-14/news/ct-met-city-council-redraw-wards-20110714_1_ward-remap-ward-boundaries-aldermen)) and explain to students that their homework is to read the article and answer the accompanying questions.

#### Enrichment/Extension:

- Have students watch “The Redistricting Song” video (found at <http://www.propublica.org/article/video-the-redistricting-song>) and complete the Mapmaker vs. Voter sheet
- Play the redistricting game at [www.redistrictinggame.org](http://www.redistrictinggame.org)
- Discussing ideas for reforming the redistricting process. (Example ideas can be found in the Brennan Center for Justice’s “Citizen’s Guide to Redistricting” by Justin Levitt. pp. 74-81)
- Examine examples of redistricting at [www.propublica.org/article/redistricting-a-devils-dictionary/single](http://www.propublica.org/article/redistricting-a-devils-dictionary/single)



## Redistricting 101

From: “A Citizen’s Guide to Redistricting” by the Brennan Center for Justice, 2010

**Redistricting** is the process of redrawing legislative district lines.

### What are legislative districts?

Because the United States has a representative democracy, the general public votes for representatives to make the decisions on their behalf. Legislative representation is decided by the population of each state (known as apportionment).

### When are districts re-drawn?

Every 10 years the Census provides an update on the population of each area. As a result of this update, states may gain or lose legislative seats (known as reapportionment). In addition, legislative districts have to be redrawn so that each district has approximately the same number of people. Redistricting is the process of redrawing legislative district lines.

### Who redraws districts?

Each state decides for itself how to draw district lines for its representatives. In Illinois, the state legislature is in charge of the redistricting process. Once they have a first draft of the new map, they hold a few public hearings to listen to input from the public. The governor has the power to veto the redistricting plan. If all three branches of government do not agree on the map, then a backup commission is created. Even if the map is approved by the government branches, the map can be challenged in the courts. The court then decides if a new map is needed.

### What is gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is the process of redrawing district lines to increase a group’s political power. The name gerrymandering comes from former Massachusetts governor Eldridge Gerry who redrew district lines to favor his party, including a very oddly shaped district resembling a salamander. Gerrymandering has come to represent redistricting drawn in bizarre, wandering shapes for the benefit of particular politicians.



### Why does redistricting matter?

The way that district lines are drawn puts voters together in groups – some voters are kept together in one district and others are separated and placed into other districts. The lines can keep people with common interests together or split them apart. Depending on which voters are bundled together in a district, the district lines can make it much easier or much harder to elect any given representative, or to elect a representative responsive to any given community. And together, the district lines have the potential to change the composition of the legislative delegation as a whole.



### Redistricting Chicago: How would you do it?

**Background:** The city of Chicago has decided that they can no longer have two baseball teams; it's too expensive! The City Council—made up of aldermen representing each ward—will vote on which team to keep and which team will be sold to another city. Before the aldermen vote, redistricting is taking place. 30 wards will be consolidated to 5 new wards. So, they have asked you—the redistricting expert, to redraw the district lines.

Here are some things to consider when you redistrict Chicago:

- Currently, there are 18 wards with a majority of Cubs fans and 12 wards with a majority of Sox fans. If the vote were to take place now, and the aldermen represented their constituents, the Cubs would stay and the Sox would be sold.
- However, you have data that suggests that the baseball team most likely to bring more money to Chicago is the Sox --they've won the World Series before!

#### How will YOU redistrict Chicago?

**Directions:** Create 5 new wards by dividing the map below into 5 groups of six squares each. Each new ward must have a majority of fans from either team (by at least one). No ties are allowed. All wards must be made up of boxes that are next to each other.

CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS
CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS
CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS	CUBS
SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX
SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX	SOX

# of new districts: \_\_\_\_\_ Sox districts \_\_\_\_\_ Cubs districts      Who stays? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you redistrict Chicago this way? \_\_\_\_\_

So, who has the most power: you as the redistricting expert, the aldermen, or the people of Chicago? \_\_\_\_\_

Write 1 positive result and 1 negative result of redistricting Chicago the way you did:

Positive: \_\_\_\_\_

Negative: \_\_\_\_\_





### Mapmaker vs. Voters:

For each question below (on the left), write the letter of the correct answer (on the right) after watching *The Redistricting Song*.<sup>1</sup>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How many Representatives does the United States have? _____</li><li>2. How many districts does the US have? _____</li><li>3. What are two principles that the song says should guide the redistricting process? _____</li><li>4. When are the lines re-drawn? _____</li><li>5. What is packing? _____</li><li>6. What is cracking? _____</li><li>7. What is kidnapping? _____</li><li>8. What is bleaching? _____</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Keep communities together</li><li>B. 435</li><li>C. Grouping people of the same race together</li><li>D. Moving a “troublesome” elected official out their district, by drawing their home into another district.</li><li>E. Grouping people from the same party together</li><li>F. After the Census, every 10 years</li><li>G. 50</li><li>H. Dividing people from the same party or race into different districts</li><li>I. Equal population in each district</li></ol>
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What message is the video trying to send?

Do you think it is important for people to understand this message? Why or why not?

<sup>1</sup> Lois Beckett, Jeff Larson and Olga Pierce. “Redistricting, a Devil’s Dictionary.” Propublica.org. Nov. 2, 2011