**Unemployment Rate Debate**

Topic: Unemployment Rates

Math Skills: Averaging, Graphing, Problem Solving, Data Organization, Public Speaking

Authors:

Jonathan Osler: jonathan.osler@gmail.com

Melissa Comerchero

*The following should be considered a work in progress. If you have any suggestions for improvements, questions for how to conduct this lesson, or if you end up teaching it, please email me. Thank you. All materials are © Jonathan Osler, 2006.*

Unemployment Rate Debate

For the first Senior Math Quarterly of the year, we will be having a debate about the unemployment rate in the United States. There is a lot of dispute about what the unemployment rate is and how it should be calculated.

**The main debate questions you will need to answer are:**

1. What is the average rate of unemployment over the past year?
2. Are Americans better off today than in the past in terms of jobs?

To answer these questions, you will be given several sets of data. It is up to you to decide which sets of data you will use, which data in your chosen sets you will analyze, and what type of math you will use to analyze this data.

For this debate, the class will be divided into four groups. Each group is going to represent a different organization, and will argue a different side of the issue. These organizations are:

* *The Federal Government*
* *The National Association of Men (NAM)*
* *The Regional Governors Group*
* *The Alliance for the Advancement of Women (AAW)*

Your goal will be to come up with an answer for the two debate questions that will support your organization. In order to do this, you will need to:

1. Analyze unemployment data
2. Make at least one graph
3. Prepare a short presentation for the debate

On Friday, November 10th, the class will be divided into four groups. Each group will have one representative from each organization who will then debate against each other. There will also be a facilitator at each table to act as a Debate Moderator.

Here is the structure for class over the next four days:

**Day 1:**

* Determine what information you’re going to use and analyze
* Begin analyzing the data

**Day 2:**

* Finish data analysis
* Make graph(s)

**Day 3:**

* Prepare for debate

**Day 4:**

* Debate

**Helpful Questions to Answer**

Which organization are you working with?

Read the information about your organization. Does your organization want to find an average unemployment rate that is high or low? Why?

**Step 1:** Determine which charts will you be using to answer Question #1 and write their titles below.

**Step 2:** Using the data for the past year, calculate the average unemployment rate in 2006 (Question #1). Your work should be on a separate piece of paper.

**Step 3:** Answer Question #2: “Are Americans better off today than in the past in terms of jobs” by looking at historical data. Your work needs to be based upon mathematical analysis/calculations and should be on a separate piece of paper.

**Step 4**: Make a graph to help you answer Question #2. It can be any type of graph, although certain graphs will be more appropriate than others.

**Step 5:** Using index cards or a similar method, prepare for the debate by deciding what you are going to say, what information you’re going to use, how you will respond to other people’s questions for you, etc.

**The Federal Government**

On April 11th, 2006, the White House released a statement that said: “Despite the Democrat’s claims, President Bush’s policies are growing our economy.”

Imagine you are working with the team that made this statement.

You want the people of the United States to believe in their President, and to think that he is doing a good job. You want people to be satisfied with their leader and his policies. If people think there are a lot of problems in the country, than they will immediately blame the President.

One of the most important issues to the American people is the economy. People want to know that the economy is strong. So it is your task to convince them that the President’s policies are working and that the economy is doing well.

**The National Association of Men**

Imagine that you work for the National Association of Men (NAM), a group that wants to make life better for men in this country.

NAM wants to make sure that people in the U.S., especially men, have jobs. Their belief is that if men are working, they can take care of their families, will commit less crimes, pay child support, feel better about themselves, make the economy better, etc.

NAM wants the federal government and the public to support their work, but in order to get this support, NAM needs to make it clear that there is a problem. If NAM shows that all men are working and have good jobs, than they wont get any more help from the federal government. On the other hand, if NAM can show that men are not working and need some extra help, the organization can get a lot of financial support to help fix the problem.

Your goal is to make an argument that will help get the organization and their members the financial and public support that they want.

**The Regional Governors Group**

When a State is having economic problems, the federal government will often give them extra money to help get through the tough times. But there is not a lot of money available, so States are always trying to compete and fight for this small amount of money.

The Governor’s for each region in the country often get together as a team to help each other out. Imagine you are going to work for one of these regional groups – you will need to choose which one.

Your goal is to help the Governor’s from your chosen region make an argument that despite all of the “hard work” that they’ve been doing in their own State, that unfortunately the economy is not doing very well. If you can prove that there are more economic problems in your region than elsewhere, you will be able to get some of the additional money from the federal government.

Here are the regions within the United States:

**Northeast**

* New England - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
* Middle Atlantic - New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

**Midwest**

* East/North Central - Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
* West/North Central - Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
* South Atlantic - Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia

**South**

* East/South Central - Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
* West/South Central - Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

**West**

* Mountain - Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
* Pacific - Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

**The Alliance for the Advancement of Women**

Imagine that you are working for the Alliance for the Advancement of Women (AAW), which is an organization that wants to make life better for women in the U.S.

AAW organization believes that women are still not receiving equal opportunities compared to other people in this country. They want to get new laws passed that would protect the rights of women, but in order to get these laws passed, AAW will need the support of the people to put pressure on the government. If the public feels that women are all doing well in this country, than they wont feel the need to help AAW get these new laws passed. However, if the public feels that women are still not receiving the same opportunities as other people, they will be more likely to support AAW.

As a member of AAW, it is your task to help get information to the public about the barriers that women are facing in the economy. If women’s economic situation appears to be good, than you wont get much help from people. But, if you can demonstrate that women’s economic situation is not good, it will help you gain a lot of public support for your legislation.

**Discusión Del Indice De Desempleo**

Para nuestro primer quarterly del año, tendremos un discusión sobre el indice de desempleo en los Estados Unidos. Hay muchos de conflicto sobre cuál es el indice de desempleo y cómo debe ser calculado.

**Las preguntas principales del discusión que usted necesitará contestar son:**

1. ¿Cuál es el índice medio de excedente del desempleo el último año?
2. ¿Están los americanos mejor de hoy que en el pasado en términos de trabajos?

Para contestar a estas preguntas, le darán varios sistemas de datos. Está hasta usted para decidir a qué sistemas de datos usted utilizará, a que analizarán los datos en sus sistemas elegidos usted, y qué tipo de matemáticas usted utilizará analizar estos datos.

Para este proyecto, la clase será dividida en cuatro grupos. Cada grupo va a representar cierta organización y discutirá un diverso lado de la edición. Estas organizaciones son:

* del gobierno federal
* la asociación nacional dde los hombres
* los gobernadores regionales agrupa
* la alianza para el adelanto de mujeres

Su meta será venir para arriba con una respuesta para las dos preguntas del discusión que apoyarán su organización. Para hacer esto, usted necesitará:

1. Analice la marca de los datos de desempleo

2. por lo menos que un gráfico

3. prepara una presentación corta para el discusión

El viernes, de noviembre el 10, la clase será dividida en cuatro grupos. Cada grupo tendrá un representante de cada organización que entonces discuta cara a cara. También habrá un facilitator en cada tabla a actuar como asesor del discusión. Aquí está la estructura para la clase durante los cuatro días próximos:

**Día 1:**

* Determínese qué información usted va a utilizar
* Comience a analizar los datos
* HW: Más trabajan el el

**día 2**

* del análisis de datos:
* Análisis de datos del final?

**día 3**

* del graph(s):
* Prepárese para el discusion

**día 4**: el discusión

¿Con qué organización usted está trabajando?

¿Su organización desea probar que el indice de desempleo sea alto o bajo? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué cartas usted utilizará contestar a la pregunta del discusión # 1? Con los datos por el último año, calcule el indice de desempleo medio en 2006 (pregunta # 1). Su trabajo debe estar en un pedazo separado de papel.

Ahora venido para arriba con una respuesta preguntar # 2:

**La alianza para el adelanto de mujeres (AAW)**

Imagínese que usted está trabajando para la alianza para el adelanto de las mujeres (AAW), que es una organización que desea hacer vida mejor para las mujeres en los E.E.U.U..

La organización de AAW cree que las mujeres todavía no están recibiendo las oportunidades iguales comparadas a la gente en este país. Ella desea conseguir los nuevos leyes aprobados que protegerían las derechas de mujeres, pero para conseguir estos leyes aprobados, AAW necesitará la ayuda de la gente aplicar la presión en el gobierno. Si el público se siente que las mujeres son todas que hacen bien en este país, que ellas no sentirán la necesidad de ayudar a AAW para conseguir estos nuevos leyes aprobados. Sin embargo, si el público se siente que las mujeres todavía no están recibiendo las mismas oportunidades que la gente, serán más probables apoyar AAW.

Como miembro de AAW, es su tarea ayudar a conseguir la información al público sobre las barreras que las mujeres sean revestimientos en la economía. Si la situación económica de las mujeres aparece ser buena, que usted no conseguirá mucha ayuda de la gente. Pero, si usted puede demostrar que la situación económica de las mujeres no es buena, le ayudará a ganar muchos de ayuda pública para su legislación.

Unemployment Rate Debate

On the day of the debate each student will be grouped with 2 or 3 other students from different organizations.

You should design your presentation according to the structure described below. However, the moderator assigned to your group will guide you through the debate and the order of events.

**Introduction (*1 minute/presenter*):**

Each student will introduce him/herself and give his/her name and a brief description (in his/her own words) of the group that they are supporting.

 Example*: Good morning/afternoon, my name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I am representing the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, which [explain what your interest group does or for whom it advocates].*

Presentation will take place in the following order:

1st—Federal Government

2nd—Regional Governors Group

3rd—National Association of Men

4th—Alliance for the Advancement of Women

**Round 1: The Average Unemployment Rate (*10 minutes/presenter*)**

**Opening Statement (3 minutes)**

1. State the average unemployment rate you calculated for your interest group. You must use visual aids help illustrate your argument – where you got your data from, and what calculations you used.

*In this part, do not reveal how you manipulated the data to support your argument. This will only discredit your argument or make it weaker.*

1. Explain why your interest group’s unemployment rate must be improved. What are the consequences to our society if it does not improve? Why is the improvement of your interest group’s unemployment rate more important or of greater consequence than the improvement of other interest groups?
2. In the case of the Federal Government, explain how or why you think that the U.S. government is doing a good job at fighting unemployment.

*It may help your argument to compare the unemployment rate given by the Federal Government to your organization’s unemployment rate. (Since the Federal Government is presenting first, you should write this unemployment rate down so that you can incorporate it into your own argument). Is your interest group’s unemployment rate higher than the national rate?*

**Writing Comments Questions (2 minutes/Presenter)**

After a presentation, each student should take 3 minutes to write down some comments and/or questions that could challenge the current presenter’s argument. Then the next student should present.

**Commenting/Questioning/ Responses (5 minuntes/Presenter):**

After all students have presented, students (in the same order in which they presented), will have an opportunity to respond to the comments and questions of the other students. First, each student will ask the Federal Government at least one question or give at least one comment. After each comment/question, the representative from the Federal Government will have a chance to respond.

After the person from the Federal Government is challenged by everyone else, comments and questions will be directed at the Regional Governors Group, and so on.

*It is not productive for students to ask the same presenter the same question. (For example, if Jonathan asks Jessica, “What type of average did you use to get your data?” then another student should not ask Jessica the same question. However, it would be OK to then ask Carlos the same question later). Thus, try your best to ask at least one question or give at least one comment that you think other students will not ask.*

**Round 2: Are Americans better off today? (*10 minutes/presenter*)**

Following the same procedure from Round 1, presenters should discuss the second debate question:

“Are Americans better off today than in the past in terms of jobs?

**Round 3: Discussion (*Time permitting)***

After Round 2, if time permits, students should continue questioning, commenting, and responding to each other. This can happen naturally in whatever way the conversation/argument may lead. Please remember the “one mic” policy, be respectful, use appropriate language, and keep comments relevant to the issue and data.

 *Commenting and questioning can continue for as long as it is productive and done respectfully. The moderator assigned to the group will let students know when the commenting/questioning component is finished.*

**Closing: (*1 minute/presenter*)**

After the moderator has ended the commenting/questioning component, each student (in the reverse order in which they presented) will thank the other students for their attention and participation in the debate and briefly (in a few sentences) restate their position and the unemployment rate of their interest group.

**Debate Checklist**

 **Notecard #1:** Description of your organization

 **Notecard #2:** The average unemployment rate over the past year that you calculated, the data you used, and how you calculated the average

 **Calculations:** You should have your calculations written out on a separate piece of paper to show to the rest of the group. This is how you are “proving” your answer is correct.

 **Notecard #3:** 2 questions someone might ask to challenge you, and what your response would be.

 **Notecard #4**: Your answer to Debate Question #2, and the work you did to get the answer

 **Calculations:** You should have your calculations written out on a separate piece of paper to show to the rest of the group. This is how you are “proving” your answer is correct.

 **Notecard #5:** 2 questions someone might ask to challenge you, and what your response would be.

**Notecard #6:** Closing Statement

 **Graph:** You need at least one graph to help illustrate your answer to either the first or second question.

**Unemployment Rate Debate – Moderator Guide**

**Overview:** You will be assigned to a group of 3 or 4 students. Each student is representing an organization that has been asked to calculate the unemployment rate for their particular interest group, and state whether they think, based on the data that they have studied, if things are improving for Americans in terms of employment.

The following is a guide to use in order to facilitate and moderate this debate.

***Introduction (1 minute per student)***

Once students are sitting in the proper groups, welcome them and ask them to introduce themselves and their organization in the following order.

 1st—Federal Government

2nd—Regional Governors Group

3rd—National Association of Men

4th—Alliance for the Advancement of Women

***Round 1***

*In this round, students will be answering this question****: “What is the average unemployment rate over the past year?”***

**For each student, Round 1 will have the following structure. Each student should go entirely through the 3 steps below before the next student goes.**

1. Presentation – 3 minutes

*Starting with the Federal Government, students should make a presentation answering the question from above. Make sure they show their calculations.*

1. Writing Comments/Questions—2 minutes

*Each student needs to write down 1 – 2 comments or questions for the student who just presented.*

 *The moderator can also make a comment or ask a question.*

1. Commenting/Questioning/Responses—5 minutes

*Each student is required to ask the presenter a question or make a comment. After each question or comment, the presenter should respond.*

**Note: Students should not be getting into too much discussion at this point in the debate – there will be time for that later. This is the more formal, structured part of the debate.**

Follow this format for the presentations of the Regional Governors Group, National Association of Men, and Alliance for the Advancement of Women (in that order).

***Round 2***

In this round, students will present their answer to the question ***“Are Americans better off today than in the past in terms of jobs?”***

Follow the same procedure from Round 1.

***Round 3* (Time permitting)**

During this round, students may conduct a discussion/argument about the issues, data, and rates presented. At this point, you may allow the flow of the discussion to happen naturally. It is important that you allow students to express themselves, but remind them to stay focused and on the subject matter. In this round, you may intervene, ask questions or make comments at whatever point you feel it is necessary.

This round can continue for as long as it remains productive and respectful.

***Closing:***

When *Round 3* has ended or when there are only a few minutes left in the period, ask each student to make their brief closing statement—in reverse order (Women, Men, Regional, Federal).

In each closing, the student should thank the group for their attention and participation and, in a few sentences, restate their position and the unemployment rate of their interest group.

STUDENT: Moderator:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Exceeds Standards** | **Meets Standards** | **Below Standards** |
| **Preparedness/ Organization** | * 6 or more notecards/papers with information that will help student present their argument.
* More than one graph
* More than one sheet of paper on which his/her calculations are written
 | * 4 or 5 notecards/papers with information that will help student present their argument.
* One graph
* One sheet of paper on which his/her calculations are written
 | * 3 or less notecards/papers with information that will help student present their argument.
* Does not have a graph
* No paper with their calculations
 |
| **Respect** | * Always uses appropriate language and or ridicules another person

 * Does not interrupt other students
* Shows a great deal of respect for the other debate participants by giving them their full attention
 | * Uses mostly appropriate language throughout the debate, and never directs inappropriate language toward another person (e.g. name calling or ridiculing)
* Occasionally interrupts other students
* Shows respect for others most of the time during the debate.
 | * Uses inappropriate language periodically, consistently or excessively during the debate, and/or directs profanity or inappropriate language toward another person.
* Frequently interrupts or distracts another students during their presentations.
* Refuses to participate, leaves the table or room without permission
* Is disrespectful to others during the debate
 |
| **Poise/Clarity** | * Consistently makes eye contact with other group members when he/she is presenting.
* Speaks clearly and loud enough to be heard by the other participants
* Is able to effectively communicate his/her message in a clear, assertive, and expressive manner.
 | * Generally makes eye contact with other group members when he/she is presenting.
* Speaks loud enough to be heard by the other participants
* Is able to adequately communicate his/her message
 | * Does not make eye contact with other group members when he/she is presenting.
* Does not consistently speak clearly and/or loud enough to be heard by the other participants
* Is not able to adequately communicate his/her message
 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participation** **as a** **Presenter**  | * Each of their presentations were at least 3 minutes
* Presentation made a convincing argument for their position, and frequently used specific data from their charts
* Answered other questions/comments thoughtfully and accurately
 | * Each of their presentations between 1 – 3 minutes long
* Presentation made a decent argument for their position, and occasionally referred to specific data from their charts
* Answered other questions/comments thoughtfully or accurately, but not both
 | * One or both of the presentations was one minutes or less.
* Presentation made a weak argument for their position and did not refer to specific data from their charts
* Did not respond to other questions/comments **OR** responded without thought or accuracy
 |
| **Participation** **as a** **Debater** | * Asks at least two questions for each of the other presenters **AND** the questions are creative and thought provoking.
* Comments/questions are consistently original and relevant to the subject matter
* Was consistently an active, creative, and insightful participant in the discussion.
 | * Asks only one questions or makes only one comments, **OR** has more comments/questions that are not creative or thought provoking
* Comments/questions are mostly original and relevant to the subject matter
* Was generally an active participant in the discussion.
 | * Does not ask at least two questions or provides at least two comments for each presenter.
* Comments/questions are "repeats" (they have already been asked and stated to the same presenter)
* Was passive and/or was not engaged in the discussion.
 |