

Considerations for Mock Election 2008

How to Get Involved Educators

On October 30, 2008, American students and parents in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and around the world will cast their votes for senators, congressmen, and governors (where there is a race) and on key national issues.

The only rule for participation in the National Student/Parent Mock Election is this: "There are no rules. The way that is right is the way that is right for you." We hope that you will consider enrolling and encouraging your school or school district's participation in the 2006 Mock Election. The enrollment will be forwarded to your state coordinator who will contact you and give you all the information you need on getting your school's votes counted and your students' voices heard.

There are myriad possibilities for participation in the Mock Election, but it's up to you to decide what and how much you want to do. A school Mock Election coordinator could, for example, simply collect the vote tallies from each classroom, add them up and phone them in to state election headquarters. Or, he or she could make Mock Election day an exciting event at school, complete with patriotic decorations, bands, speeches and young "election officials" who tally the votes. (One school phoned us on Mock Election night to say, "We thought you would like to know 14 candidates just visited our school.") If you cannot persuade your school to take part, do it in one or more classes and see how contagious the excitement becomes.

The American Association of School Administrators includes among the 10 elements necessary to the content of education: "Knowledge of American history and government to function in a democratic society and an understanding of issues surrounding patriotism." And points out that, "Being involved in our representative democracy is critical for our nation's future."

Encourage your students to decide what they hope to learn by this experience, and, at the end, to evaluate what they have learned. In other words, the Mock Election seeks to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning and then to motivate them by providing learning activities they find so exciting they want to go on learning. Check our curriculum page for all the possibilities there are to choose from. The choices are yours. There is no mandate for participation in the National Student/Parent Mock Election. You are free to use whatever curriculum, from whatever source, is right for your students.

We hope that you will share the results of your experience with us and with all the other American teachers, students and parents around the world who will be participating with you. We look forward with great pleasure to hearing from you on October 30, 2008, Mock Election day, and to receiving your evaluation as soon as possible thereafter

Students

Students from across the country, and around the world, participate in the National Student/Parent Mock Election not only by casting their votes on Mock Election Day, but by leading Mock Election projects school-wide, district-wide, and statewide. Mock Election participants have organized cable call in programs, candidate forums, quiz contests and get out the vote campaigns, held mock press conferences and debates, and even "Inaugural Balls." They have tallied Mock Election votes everywhere from state capitols and presidential libraries to television stations and schools, and made certain their voices were heard not only on candidates,

but on key national issues. They involved governors, senators, congressmen, secretaries of state and state legislators.

Some, as a result of their Mock Election experiences, ended up working on Capitol Hill or in state Capitols, frequently for the public officials they met while participating in the Mock Election. Some, in Texas and Kansas, for example, secured paid positions as poll watchers as a result of their Mock Election experiences. Further examples of student activities can be found in [Reports from the Real World](#) and [Guide to the National Student/Parent Mock Election](#). Click on the links below for some ideas about what to do in your school, classroom, or home. Let your teachers and/or parents know if you would like to have a Mock Election at your school.

Elementary and Middle School

You can:

- Have a puppet show in which the puppets ask the audience to vote for them and tell them why. How will your viewers vote?
- Create your own political party. Invite your friends to join. Will you have a mascot? Who will be the party's candidate? What will your party stand for? What is your party's position on the environment? Education? Write a party platform. Do any of your classmates wish to form an opposing party? Organize a debate between opposing candidates.
- Use your local newspaper to:
 - Track your state's candidates in the 2006 election as they travel through the state. Map their campaign trail. Are they visiting schools? Hospitals? What groups of people are they talking to? What are they promising to do if elected? Do the promises change depending on which group they are talking about? Do the issues they talk about change?
 - Read the editorials of different papers about the candidates. Do the papers support the same candidates? Why is the paper supporting one candidate more than another? Write an editorial or a letter to the editor about the candidate you think is the best and why everyone should vote for your candidate. Submit it to your local newspaper.
 - Read the editorial cartoons. Draw one of your own. Organize a class contest for the best cartoon.
- Design a poster that will encourage students to vote in the Mock Election. What will your slogan be? Where will you put your poster? Design a poster for the real election. Where will you put it so that more people can see it and be encouraged to vote?
- Contact your local League of Women Voters and ask them to visit your school to talk about elections and the plans for election reform in your state.
- Invite your local candidates to come to your school and debate the issues. If they are unable to attend, hold your own issues debate with the students role-playing the candidates.
 - Choose a moderator.
 - What questions do you want the candidates to answer?
- Hold a mock press conference:
 - Invite a TV or newspaper reporter to your school to talk about press conferences and give you some tips on how to ask good questions.
 - Study the candidates' stand on the issues.
 - Decide who will role-play the candidates. Who will be the reporters?
 - Invite your parents and classmates to attend the press conference.
- Ask an election clerk to come to school and talk about how votes are tallied and how elections work. What changes have taken place since the election of 2004? Ask the clerk to help your class register for the 2006 Mock Election just as if you were registering for

- the actual elections. What forms will you need to fill out? Where do you send the form when it's complete? What happens next?
- Challenge another class (or school) to a quiz team competition. Which team knows the most about previous elections in America's history? Which team knows the most about the candidates running for election? Which team knows more about how elections work?
 - Write a letter to your elected officials (senators, congressmen, governor, secretary of state, or the president) and ask them why they believe voting is important and why young voters should vote for them.
 - Host an "election tea party" — invite older people and ask them to talk about past elections they remember. What issues were important to them then? What issues are important to them now? Who was their favorite president?
 - **Find out about the candidates and VOTE on Mock Election day Encourage your parents and family to vote on Nov. 2 -- and Nov. 7.**

Here are examples of what other kids have done in their schools' Mock Elections:

Students from Azalea Gardens Middle School made commercials for the candidates they liked the most. They wrote the script for the commercials, acted in them, filmed them and showed them to their class and to their parents.

The seventh graders at Urban Middle School in Sheboygan, Wisconsin wanted to encourage everyone in their town to vote. They thought having a billboard with a message to vote would help. The students contacted a local sign company owner about a billboard. The owner was so impressed that he offered the use of the billboard for free. But, class members wanted to prove that they were really serious about voting. They decided to raise the money for the project themselves. They earned the money by babysitting, raking leaves, doing odd jobs, raiding piggy banks, having bake sales, collecting aluminum cans, etc., and in only four and a half school days, raised \$111.07 to pay for the billboard.

People at the sign company said they weren't planning to vote, but after seeing how hard the students worked, several said, "I'll have to go vote."

What will YOU do?

High School

You could:

- Create your "ideal candidate." What party does your candidate represent? What office is the candidate running for? What campaign strategy will your candidate use to win the election? Role-play a debate between your candidate and a candidate from the opposing party. Ask your audience to vote for the winner.
- Write, record and edit a political advertisement for your candidate. Organize a school-wide contest for the best ad. Do negative ads win?
- Look at the New Millennium Report of the National Association of Secretaries of State at www.stateofthevote.org. Do you agree or disagree with the opinions of the students interviewed? Organize your own student poll about the decline in the participation of America's youngest voters. Share your findings with your secretary of state.
- Design and distribute a voter registration form for the Mock Election. Use an actual voter registration form as your model.
- Prepare to tally the votes for your school, school district or state's Mock Election. How will you guarantee a fair and accurate tally?

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the importance of voting and/or about why you support the candidates you do. Will they publish your letter? Send a copy to the National Student/Parent Mock Election, P.O. Box 36653, Tucson, AZ 85740.
- Role-play the candidates for governor of your state and hold debates for the elementary and middle school students. Invite the media.
- Volunteer to help in a candidate's election campaign. Write a report on your experience.
- Put together a "how to" kit to help new voters register to vote. Share it with your local election clerk.
- Talk to a military veteran and ask him what democracy means to him. Tape-record your interview and share it with you class.
- Talk to a senior citizen and ask about the history of voting in our country from someone who has lived through tremendous changes in our electoral system. Start a class collection of oral interviews.
- Organize a "Candidates Forum." Invite competing candidates to come for a special night at your school to meet students and parents and share their views.
- Research the candidates and VOTE on Mock Election day.

Establishing a state's election headquarters

All over the country, high school students man the phones, faxes and computers as the votes come in from schools across the state. In some states, high school students train, practice on Mock Election day, and work on the regular Election Day as paid poll workers. In other states, high school students role-play the candidates and hold debates before the elementary and middle school students. Many high school students are in charge of their school and/or school districts' Mock Elections.

Students with driver's licenses have volunteered to drive adults to the polls. Many students volunteered to help out in a candidate's campaign office and gained real insight into the world of politics and political campaigns.

Here are a few examples of what students around the country have done and are planning for 2002:

Becoming Politically Active

For the last two decades, the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) has been the state coordinator of the Maryland Mock Election. Those motivated and politically savvy students began preparing for this fall's election last February. They have been active in lobbying days, legislative forums, and in taking positions on bills that affect youth.

Town Hall Meeting

High School students from Luz Academy, a predominantly Mexican-American charter school in Tucson, Arizona designed a Town Hall meeting for their 2000 Mock Election day event. They invited parents, teachers, politicians and other interested parties to discuss the state and national issues. The event was bilingual throughout. Students had questions prepared in advance, made voting stations to collect votes, made campaign signs and held debates with other students.

Youth Policy Forums

In October of 2001, the Virginia Student/Parent Mock Election hosted its second annual Youth Policy Forum. Five students had an idea that evolved into the first Youth Policy Forum, an event that brought 100 high school students from around Virginia to the state Capitol to discuss issues that affect and concern youth. The daunting task of organizing such an event did not faze its

student coordinators, who considered the job a learning experience. Participants in the Youth Policy Forum, often student leaders in their school, traveled to the Capitol to speak for the students they represented, meet leaders like themselves and converse with the officials whose faces they see only in the newspapers.

Educating Elected Officials

Students are not the only ones given the opportunity to learn, but also elected officials. The Youth Policy Forum allows students to address delegates about the issues that concern the students, which provides elected officials with student insight to topics such as new driving laws and state standardized tests. Often asked to defend laws that were passed, or support regulations that a room full of high school students oppose, such as raising the driving age, the distinguished guests were good sports and always commented in the end on what a “tough and informed audience” students were.

What will YOU do?

Parents

The National Student/Parent Mock Election seeks to turn the sense of powerlessness that keeps young Americans and often their parents from going to the polls into a sense of the power of participation in our democracy. Psychologists tell us it is this same sense of powerlessness that is the cause of violence. One of the most important ways to increase young people's sense of significance — and power — is to use the Mock Election to take them out of the classroom and into the real world.

Parents in some school districts vote with the students on Mock Election day, if they wish, and help plan and participate in Mock Election events, registering the younger voters, helping to decorate for the school's Mock Election event, etc. Research has shown that parents involved with their children at school have a significant impact on school achievement. Encourage your children's schools to become involved in this hands-on experience in the electoral process. Discuss the candidates and discover your children's feelings about the national issues.

The National Student/Parent Mock Election began as a project designed to use TV dramas to open communication between parents and children. We soon discovered that the elections were a huge national drama that enabled parents and children to talk with each other. Try it. Above all express your determination and belief in the importance of voting and participating in our democracy.

Public Officials

Public officials from every level of government can help make the Mock Election in their states' or districts' schools an exciting occasion for the students and their parents as well. The possibilities include participating in a candidate's forum with students and parents, talking to students about election reform, and attending a Mock Election as the votes come in. Students who have an opportunity to meet and interact with you will have an unforgettable experience. Let them hear your positions on the issues, your plans for the future, the basics of government and how they can make their voices heard in our democracy. Your participation can empower them to vote for a lifetime. To be put in touch with your state's Mock Election coordinator, or with other public officials who have participated, please contact us.

State or School District Coordinators

The responsibility of the volunteer coordinator is to “get the word out and the votes in.” State coordinators have included secretaries of state in many states, a nonprofit foundation in Alabama and a political science professor in New York state. If you would like to know if a coordinator is needed in your state or district or would like further information, please [Contact Us](#).

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the desired outcomes for students?
2. What level of involvement is desired?
3. What resources can we provide?
4. What methods will be used for voting? Online? Paper?
5. What candidates/issues will be listed?
6. What are the dos and don'ts for teachers in facilitating the vote?
7. How can we best replicate the real election process?
8. What issues are appropriate at what level for discussion?
9. How can we insure that student voters are informed?
10. What enrichment activities could we assist with?
 - a. Issues discussion/debate
 - b. Registration
 - c. Voting booths
 - d. Election Judges
 - e. Campaigning
 - f. Fund Raising
 - g. Political party activities
 - h. Fair election practices
 - i. Other student involvement – planning, judging, etc.
11. What Service-Learning opportunities could be built around the election?
 - a. Helping get elderly and disabled registered and to the polls
 - b. Helping ELL populations
 - c. Campaign activities
 - d. Assisting and educating disadvantaged populations
12. How can we organize to achieve our objectives?
13. What vehicles/methods can we use to help teachers?
 - a. Web Pages
 - b. Instructional Materials
 - c. Contact Lists
 - d. Guest speakers
 - e. Informational Materials/Guides
14. What other organizations could be involved?
15. How will the media be involved? What PR efforts should be made?
16. How can we organize for communication, support and success?

USOE Civics Website - <http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lifeskills/civics.htm>

Campaign for the Campaign Website - <http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/civics/campaign/>

Mock Election 2006 - <http://mockelection.myutips.org/>