Mikva Challenge

Elections in Action

Mikva Challenge
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Introduction

WHAT IS MIKVA CHALLENGE?
Mikva Challenge is a nonpartisan 501(c)3 organization, founded in 1997 as a tribute to former White House Counsel, Judge, and U.S. Congressman Abner Mikva and his wife Zoe, a lifelong education activist. Mikva Challenge develops the next generation of civic leaders, activists, and policymakers by providing young people with opportunities to actively participate in the political process. We believe that the best way to learn leadership and to learn democracy is to experience both.

The most important cornerstone of our work is our belief that young people have knowledge and deserve to fully participate in our democracy. Young people know what’s happening in their neighborhoods. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of their schools. They know what hopes, challenges, and opportunities they must tackle. This makes young people experts on issues affecting them, their peers, and their communities. Mikva Challenge was founded on the simple premise that youth voice and participation matter, and that our civic and political life will be stronger when youth participate and help shape their own future.

WHAT IS ACTION CIVICS?
Mikva Challenge believes that the best means of training young people for their roles as citizens and leaders is actually to allow them a real chance to participate in authentic democratic activities—from elections to advocacy, from public debates to creation of new civic media. We believe that this is the best way to begin cultivating a vibrant democratic ethos in young people.

We facilitate this learning for students through an Action Civics process in which:

- youth voice is encouraged, valued and incorporated to the fullest extent possible
- experiences, knowledge, perspectives, and concerns of youth are incorporated to the fullest extent possible
- students learn by doing, with a focus on collective action
- student reflection and analysis are central to the process
WHY ELECTIONS IN ACTION?
We’ve all seen the dire news stories about youth voting statistics and youth civic knowledge.

We know these statistics, but we also know that young people aren’t apathetic. They care deeply about their communities, and—if we give them the opportunity—they want to have a voice in how their communities are run. We also know that young people can have a major impact in the outcome of elections as evidenced by the outcome of the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections.

For this reason, Mikva Challenge has prepared these Elections in Action lessons for students to learn about the electoral process and campaigns, learn about the candidates, identify their own ideology, and get involved in the electoral process. It’s our job, as teachers and youth workers, to invite youth to be active participants in the political process.

We believe that the best way for students to learn civics is to “do civics.” With that in mind, this curriculum includes multiple opportunities for action, from registering voters to campaigning for candidates. These opportunities are described in the final section, entitled Taking Action. We recommend you look at the options before beginning and make a decision about what types of actions you would like your students to participate in.

It would be impossible for this curriculum alone to reflect the perpetually changing landscape of the drama and intrigue of any election as it happens in real time. To stay current, Mikva Challenge’s Center for Action Civics will regularly update postings of readings, videos, lessons, and events related to elections on our website: www.actioncivics.org/elections-in-action-lessons/. Check back early and often!

NOTE: These lessons are designed for high school students, although we have had K–8 teachers adapt and use them as well. We understand that each class is different and encourage you to modify and adapt lessons to best meet the needs of your students in a given election cycle. Opportunities for enrichment and extension are offered throughout.

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM
Elections in Action is by no means a one-size-fits-all manual. The curriculum was expressly designed for educators to pick and choose lessons that best suit their needs and the needs of their students. Teachers use this curriculum in a variety of different contexts, including integrating it into their standard curriculum, in advisory, as an elective course, or in an after-school club. Given this range, we have designed the lessons to allow for maximum flexibility and adaptability. You may find the need to modify some lessons in order to differentiate for the needs of your students by providing more challenge or more scaffolding. We provide suggestions for adaptations and know that teachers possess a host of strategies to do so as well.

Each lesson includes an overview, objectives, materials, assessments, and alignment to Common Core State Standards. The lessons can be scaffolded to be used with 6–12 grade students. We have used the 11–12 CCSS grade band here for reference.

The lessons in the Elections in Action curriculum follow a Before, During, and After format, beginning with a Bell-ringer. Here is a brief explanation of this format:
• **Bell-ringer:** Helps get students settled and ready for the day’s lesson. The purpose of the bell-ringer is to *activate prior knowledge* (either by reviewing a past lesson or the previous night’s homework, or by framing a theme for the day’s lesson). Ideally a bell-ringer should take no longer than five minutes and can be done independently by students (with minimal teacher direction) so the teacher can attend to logistics in the first few minutes of class like taking attendance and conferring with individual students if necessary.

• **Before:** This part of the lesson usually builds off of the bell-ringer and acts as a transition to the day’s lesson (e.g., students sharing their responses to the bell-ringer in a discussion or pair and share). The purpose of the **Before** is to *set the purpose for the lesson.*

• **During:** Generally consisting of *new knowledge or skill acquisition*, the **During** can be accomplished through the teacher modeling a skill, direct instruction of a concept, or deep student-directed inquiry.

• **After:** Students apply their new knowledge in some way, either through guided work or independent practice to *demonstrate their understanding of the new material*. The **After** can act as the daily assessment so the teacher can gauge whether students understood the day’s objectives. If the students do not seem to have understood the objectives, the teacher may want to stop and re-teach what they missed.

The appendix provides additional resources for teachers in engaging students in Action Civics and student-centered project-based learning.
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, the McCormick Foundation, and the Polk Bros. Foundation for their generous support of Mikva Challenge and the Center for Action Civics. Thanks to Jon Schmidt and Martin Moe, our colleagues at Chicago Public Schools who have supported this work. And thanks to the Cook County Board of Elections for being such a tremendous partner and champion for youth electoral engagement.

We would also like to thank the teachers and students who have participated in our Elections in Action and Student Judges program in Chicago over the years. Teachers have provided inspiration and leadership that has helped thousands of students become active citizens. Their input and advice helped make this curriculum a reality. Special thanks to Linda Becker, Mike Good, and Cristina Perez for crafting the heart of some of the lessons found here.

We are forever grateful for our students; without them, Mikva Challenge wouldn’t exist. It is their passion, motivation, and dedication on the campaign trail that has enabled us to believe in the future of our democracy.

Visit www.actioncivics.org for additional resources and activities. If you want more information on how to get involved in Mikva Challenge programs, please contact us at cfac@mikvachallenge.org.
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INTRODUCING ELECTIONS
LESSON: THE POWER OF VOTING—2 DAYS

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to activate students’ current opinions regarding voting and challenge them to consider the power of voting in new ways.

Objectives: SWBAT
- Express views on voting
- Discuss the value of voting
- View and respond to the Rock the Vote video The History of Voting
- Analyze reasons why suffrage has been denied to certain groups in history
- Present an argument for or against voting
- Discuss the connection between voting and power

Materials:
- Stand and Declare signs
- Rock the Vote The History of Voting video (available online)
- Suffrage Timeline worksheet
- Suffrage Events worksheet
- Computer with LCD player and speakers

Assessment:
- Persuasive paragraph on voting

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

BELL-RINGER: STAND AND DECLARE

Before the students enter the room, create four signs labeled Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Hang one sign in each corner of the room so as to create a spectrum from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Explain how Stand and Declare works:
1. I’ll read a statement.
2. After the statement is read, you should decide whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.
3. You should then go stand in the corner that represents your opinion.
4. After everyone has chosen a corner, you will have one minute to discuss why you selected that corner. You should also choose a representative.
5. Each corner’s representative will then have one minute to explain their position to the class.

6. Be sure to listen carefully to the representatives. If you feel persuaded at any point and change your opinion, you may move to a different corner.

Have the students respond by going to the corner that best represents their view using the following statements, one at a time:

• “Elected officials can make a difference on issues that matter to us.”
• “Voting is a right.”
• “Voting is powerful.”
• “When I am old enough to vote, I plan to vote.”

BEFORE: YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE

Divide students into four groups. Inform students that their school is considering abolishing homework. Explain that each group will represent a different group of people that have an interest in the school homework policy: students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Assign each group their role. Explain that members of each group must vote based on how they think people in the group they are representing would vote.

Allow students five minutes in their small groups to discuss why they think members of their group should vote a certain way.

NOTE: Complete the next part of this activity in two or three minutes.

Poll the groups about whether they are for or against homework to see what the results would be if the election were held with everyone present voting. Tally the results on the board.

Announce that the student group cannot participate in the voting because they need to go to class. Have the group representing the students get up and move to the back of the room. Hold another quick round of voting without the student group participating and tally the results on the board.

Announce that the parent group needs to leave to go to work or to take care of their young children and have the parent group move to the back of the room. Revote once again, and write the new totals on the board.

Repeat this process one more time, this time eliminating the teachers who need to leave to go teach class. In the final vote, only the administrators get a say in deciding whether to abolish homework or not. Tally the new totals on the board.

Have the students sit back down with their group and lead a debrief discussion addressing the following points:

• How did the election results change depending on who was allowed to vote?
• How did it feel being told you could not vote? How did it feel to watch others decide on something you cared about without your input?
Those of you who always kept the power to vote, how did it feel to make decisions for other people? Do you think it was fair for you to have all the power? Did you consider the views of the other people or did you vote only in your own interest?

Why is it important to have a vote?

**DURING: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE VOTE**

Clearly, who votes affects the outcome of elections. Remind students that throughout the history of the United States, not all Americans have been allowed to vote. Show Rock the Vote’s 3½-minute video, *The History of Voting* [http://democracyday.com/history-of-voting-video.html](http://democracyday.com/history-of-voting-video.html). If you do not have access to the Internet in your classroom, burn the video onto a DVD outside of school and play the DVD.

Prior to this matching activity, you will need to print one *Suffrage Timeline* worksheet and one *Suffrage Events* worksheet for each group. (If possible, print each group’s worksheets on a different colored paper.) Cut each *Suffrage Events* worksheet into six slips of paper: one for each suffrage event. Distribute one *Suffrage Timeline* worksheet and the six suffrage event slips of paper to each group. Create a mini-competition where each group needs to complete the timeline by placing each slip of paper next to the appropriate timeline dates. Once a group completes the timeline, they should raise their hands to have you check it. The first group to successfully complete it wins. In order to avoid random guessing, tell the students that they must wait 30 seconds before they resubmit their answers. Have the winning group share the correct answers with the rest of the class.

**AFTER: WHY WOULD PEOPLE BE DENIED THE RIGHT TO VOTE?**

Lead a discussion using the following prompts:

- Why would people be denied the right to vote?
- What does that say about the importance of voting?
DAY 2

BELL-RINGER: LOOK OUT THE WINDOW
Ask the students to stand at the window and make a list all the tangible examples they see of government. You may want to prompt them by asking, “Who is responsible for paving our streets? Who makes the traffic lights work?” (Instead of having the students look out the window, you might want to take your students for a walk around the block and have them write down all the examples of government they see.)

BEFORE: BELL-RINGER LIST
Compile a list on the board of all the ways we see government playing a role in our lives. You may want to prod them further with questions that go beyond what can be seen out the window. Have them think about what they did the day before such as being in school, talking on the phone, paying sales tax at a store, commuting home.

Ask the students how they feel about the quality of the examples listed on the board. You may want to prompt them by asking, “Are the streets clean and well paved? Is the sales tax too high? Is public transportation well run and priced appropriately? Is the school in good condition? Are there enough classroom supplies? Are there things you wish the government did differently?”

DURING: THE POWER OF VOTERS
Explain that they are going to listen to an example of a place where citizens were not satisfied with the quality of the services provided by their government and did something about it through their power as voters.

Have the students read and/or listen to “An Act of Faith in America” by Michael Seifert (http://thisibelieve.org/essay/989/) from the National Public Radio broadcast of “This I Believe” and write down what they think the main takeaway from the story is.

AFTER: DISCUSS “AN ACT OF FAITH IN AMERICA”
Lead a discussion and/or assign a writing assignment using the following prompts:

• In your own words, describe what that piece was about.
• Why, initially, was the county commissioner unresponsive to the Cameron Park community’s needs?
• How did the community get the attention of elected officials?
• How did the lives of the residents of Cameron Park change as a result of voting?

Have the students write a one paragraph reflection on the questions: Do you plan to vote when you get older? Why or why not? Support your answer with evidence that will help convince others that they should or should not vote.
**Enrichment/Extension**: One documentary that chronicles the power of the ballot through voter disenfranchisement in 2000 and 2004 is *American Blackout* ([www.freedocumentaries.org](http://www.freedocumentaries.org)). It can be a powerful tool for discussion but note that the film represents the perspective that the disenfranchisement of voters was an intentional tactic used by the party in office to win an election. In this case, the party in office is the Republican Party and voters who are denied the right to vote are predominantly minorities. We recommend you discuss the filmmaker’s point of view and possible bias within that point of view. The article “More ACORN Voter Fraud Comes to Light” from *The Wall Street Journal* ([http://tinyurl.com/pqb4bj](http://tinyurl.com/pqb4bj)) offers a counterpoint to *American Blackout* as it reports tampering with the voting process by some community groups within ACORN.
Suffrage Events

Teachers: Prior to the this matching activity, you will need to print one Suffrage Timeline worksheet and one Suffrage Events worksheet for each group. (If possible, print each group’s worksheets on a different colored paper.) Cut each Suffrage Events worksheet into six slips of paper: one for each suffrage event.

- The Voting Rights Act outlaws the use of voting taxes and literacy tests as a restriction to voting
- Land-owning white male citizens over the age of 21 can vote
- All male and female citizens over the age of 18 can vote
- All male citizens over the age of 21 can vote
- All white male citizens over the age of 21 can vote
- All male and female citizens over the age of 21 can vote
Suffrage Timeline

Have someone in your group read the six suffrage event slips of paper aloud. Then, as a group, place each slip of paper next to the appropriate date on this timeline. Raise your hands when you are finished.
**LESSON: VOTER VALUES**

**Overview:** Every individual has a set of values that guide their decision-making. This is true when it comes to choosing a candidate to support as well. This lesson asks students to begin to explore their values and be aware of how those values shape their candidate choice.

**Objectives:**
- SWBAT
  - Reflect on the values that inform their own choice for candidate
  - Compare their values with those of their peers

**Materials:**
- Voter Values handout

**CCSS:**
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1c** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1d** Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

**BELL-RINGER: VOTER VALUES**
Distribute a Voter Values handout to every student. Have students circle the ten values/qualities that are most important to them when choosing a candidate to support.

**BEFORE: NARROWING IT DOWN**
Next, divide the room into pairs. Ask each partner to explain their ten value choices to their partner. Allow for some brief discussion in the pairs. Then ask each student to narrow his/her values down to five. Once completed, partners should again explain what they crossed off, what they kept, and why.

Now have the students individually narrow their list to just three values. Finally, ask them to think hard about the remaining values and then cross off one at a time until they each have only one left.

**DURING: TAKING STOCK**
Create a quick list of the students’ most important values on the board. Put check marks next to a value every time it appears so that you can see which ones were chosen most.
AFTER: REFLECTION

Have the students respond in writing to the following questions during class or for homework:

• How did it feel to cross off values? Was it hard? Were there obvious choices?
• Can you imagine a scenario in which a candidate would also have to prioritize his or her own values?
• Why is your number one value so important to you?
• If one candidate shares some of your values and another shares some others, how do you decide who you should support? Does your number one value outweigh all the others? Do you think you should choose the candidate who shares a greater number of your values? Do you decide based on something else?
**Voter Values**

Directions: Circle the ten values/qualities that are most important to you when choosing a candidate to support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age/Health</th>
<th>Political Party Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devotion to family</td>
<td>Position on abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Position on the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electability</td>
<td>Position on education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endorsements</td>
<td>Position on the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Public Office</td>
<td>Position on health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign policy experience</td>
<td>Position on immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Position on national security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other _____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LESSON: WHERE DO I STAND ON THE ISSUES?

Overview: In this lesson, students explore their position on major issues. NOTE: some students may not have ever thought about some of these issues so be prepared to allow time for exploration and explanation.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Define and reflect on their own positions on key issues
• Define liberal, moderate, and conservative

Assessment:
• Written reflection on Where Do I Stand? results

Materials:
• Stand and Declare signs
• Where Do I Stand? questionnaire
• Mapping Your Ideology handout

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

BEFORE CLASS BEGINS: Hang the Stand and Declare signs (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) in the four corners of your room.

BELL-RINGER: WHERE DO YOU STAND?
Have the students complete the Where Do I Stand? questionnaire individually.

BEFORE: STAND AND DECLARE
NOTE: Refer to the Stand and Declare activity in the “Power of Voting” lesson on page 2 for directions.

Do a Stand and Declare activity using a few of the statements from the Where Do I Stand? questionnaire. This is a great opportunity for students to practice controversial but civil conversations. Stress that they can change the answers they wrote down during the bell-ringer if their Stand and Declare conversations help them understand the issues in a new way.

DURING: MAPPING YOUR IDEOLOGY
Again, tell the students that it is perfectly acceptable if their point of view has changed as a result of their Stand and Declare conversations. Have the students modify their Where Do I Stand? bell-ringer questionnaires to reflect any relevant changes.

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Distribute the *Mapping Your Ideology* handout. Using an overhead or LCD projector, model how to map one’s ideology using the score from the *Where Do I Stand?* questionnaire. Have the students map their own ideology based on their *Where Do I Stand?* score.

**AFTER: REFLECTION**

Have the students read the definitions of liberal, conservative, and moderate and write a one-paragraph response to the following questions:

- Which of the issues discussed are you most passionate about? Are there other issues that are not listed but are important to you? If so, what are they?
- According to this questionnaire, where did you fall on the ideological spectrum? Based on the description of liberals, moderates, and conservatives, do you think your results accurately depict your ideology?

**NOTE:** Use the students’ reflective paragraphs as a formative assessment to help you see to what extent students understand the different political ideologies.

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**Enrichment/Extension:** If you would like your students to spend more time examining their ideologies, you can visit the following websites and have them take multiple ideological quizzes and compare the results:

- [www.theadvocates.org/quiz](http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz)
- [www.politicalcompass.org/test](http://www.politicalcompass.org/test)

This lesson also provides an opportunity to discuss complex ideologies such as libertarianism (socially liberal, economically conservative) and populist (socially conservative, economically liberal). A great graphic of the ideological spectrum can be found at [http://tinyurl.com/6x2p7s6](http://tinyurl.com/6x2p7s6).
Where Do I Stand?

Complete the following questionnaire to get an idea of where you stand politically. For each question, circle the position that best corresponds to your point of view. Tally your scores using the scoring guide below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do I stand on SOCIAL ISSUES?</th>
<th>Where do I stand on ECONOMIC ISSUES?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government should not censor speech, press, media or Internet.</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A woman should have a legal right to choose to have an abortion.

| Agree | The government should play a large role in regulating international trade. | Agree |
| Maybe | | Maybe |
| Disagree | | Disagree |

Same-sex couples should have access to the same rights as heterosexual couples.

| Agree | Social Security is a necessary public program that should not be privatized. | Agree |
| Maybe | | Maybe |
| Disagree | | Disagree |

The government should repeal laws prohibiting adult possession and use of drugs.

| Agree | Public welfare programs are necessary and an appropriate use of tax dollars. | Agree |
| Maybe | | Maybe |
| Disagree | | Disagree |

The government should ensure that all individuals have access to quality health care.

| Agree | Cutting taxes and reducing government spending by 50% or more would do more harm than good. | Agree |
| Maybe | | Maybe |
| Disagree | | Disagree |

**Scoring:** Give yourself 0 points for every Agree, 10 points for every Maybe, and 20 points for every Disagree.

Social Issues total: ___________ Economic Issues total: ___________
Mapping Your Ideology

Take your score from the Where Do I Stand? questionnaire and plot your social issues total with your economic issues total until you locate your position on the axis.

What exactly does it mean to be a liberal or a conservative? What does it mean to support the left or the right?

Ideology refers to the set of beliefs characteristic of a person, group or political party. The original definition of a liberal was someone who advocated change, new philosophies, and new ideas. A conservative was someone who avoided change, instead preferring to stick to the tried and true. In modern times, these definitions have expanded to include a wide set of political beliefs. Below are general working definitions of liberals, conservatives, and moderates.

- **Liberals**—Favor a more active federal government in regulating business, supporting social welfare, and protecting minority rights, but prefer less regulation of private social conduct. The Democratic Party is generally considered to represent a liberal ideology.

- **Conservatives**—Favor a more limited and local government, less government regulation of markets, more social conformity to traditional norms and values, and tougher policies toward criminals. The Republican Party is generally considered to represent a conservative ideology.

- **Moderates**—May hold a mix of views on various issues. Most Americans consider themselves moderates.
LESSON: CURRENT EVENTS

Overview: We recommend that you have your students keep abreast of the election through current events. Below are some suggestions for how to organize current events in your class.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Stay abreast of current topics, controversies, and updates in the current election
• Track the issues that they care about and their status in the election
• Analyze and assess the media’s coverage of the election

Materials:
• News sources such as newspapers, online news sources, and broadcast news

Assessments:
• Current event assignments

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Depending upon which objectives you are stressing, choose one of the following strategies to use consistently within your class:

• Have the students follow issues in the news that they identify as relevant to them and what the candidates are saying about those issues.
• Assign each student a news outlet and ask him or her to follow that organization’s election coverage each week. Have students compare the election coverage from the perspectives of the different news sources.
• Assign groups of students different forms of news such as broadcast, newspapers, and political blogs and have them collect information throughout the week. Arrange students in groups in which someone from each news group is represented and have groups compare the coverage.
• Each week, ask for a student volunteers to be the Week in Review news correspondents for the class. They should keep track of the big election-related news stories for the past week and present a five-minute update to the class. Encourage them to have fun! For example, you could have them sit at a big desk at the front of the room, create a cheesy news station backdrop, and/or play a news theme song.
VOTING RIGHTS
LESSON: WHO VOTES?

Overview: Students will examine who votes and who doesn’t and begin to analyze reasons why.

Objectives: SWBAT
- Analyze voter statistics
- Hypothesize why people don’t vote
- Conduct a survey

Materials:

Assessments:
- Voting statistics analysis
- Community voting survey (HW)
- Socratic Seminar (optional)

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

BELL-RINGER: WHY DON’T SOME PEOPLE VOTE?
Have the students write a response to the question, “Why don’t some people vote?”

BEFORE: SHARE OUT
Have the students share their responses. You may want to mention the following reasons if students do not bring them up:
- Lack of time
- Lack of information about candidates
- Lack of information about the process
- Skepticism
- Apathy

apathy: an absence of interest (in this case for voting)

DURING: VOTING STATISTICS ANALYSIS
Explain to the students that they are going to look at voting trends based on various demographics.

demographic: sections of the human population broken down by a certain characteristic such as age, sex, income, etc.
Have the students analyze the data from the Voting Statistics: 2004/2008/2012 Elections worksheet and answer the questions. You may want to do the first one or two questions together to get students started.

**AFTER: IMPLICATIONS OF NOT VOTING**

Write the following quote on the board and have the students interpret the meaning:

“Bad politicians are sent to Washington by good people who don’t vote.”
—William E. Simon

Ask the students: What are the implications of the voting trends they examined? Who gets to decide who gets elected? Is it democratic? You may want to note that these statistics are for national elections, and the voter turnout in local elections is significantly lower.

**Enrichment/Extension:** You could spend an extra day on this lesson and use the voting demographics data as the text for a Socratic Seminar for a deeper examination of voting trends.

**CLOSER: EXPLAIN COMMUNITY VOTING SURVEY**

Explain to the students that they will test their hypothesis of why people don’t vote by surveying voters in their own community. For homework, each student must survey five adults (parents, older family members, business owners, etc.) from the community to find out the following information:

a. If the person is registered to vote, and why or why not?
b. If the person voted in the last election, and why or why not?

Give the students at least two days, if not more, to bring in their survey results. (This is a good weekend assignment.) The Community Voting Analysis lesson that follows will allow your students to analyze their data.
Sources: U.S. Census, CNN, and Project Vote

2004

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2. Which age group had the lowest percentage of voters in all three years?

3. Which year had the lowest total voter turnout?
4. How did voter turnout change among voters age 18–24 from 2004 to 2008?

5. How did voter turnout change among voters age 18–24 from 2008 to 2012?

6. Do all registered voters actually vote? How do you know?

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7. Which gender had higher voter turnout in 2004 and 2008?

8. Did that gender maintain higher voter turnout in 2012?

9. Which gender saw the greatest growth in turnout over the three elections?

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17. Describe the trend correlating household income with voter turnout.
2008

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18. Which educational level had the highest percentage of voters?

19. Which education group had the lowest percentage of voters?

20. Using all the data provided above, compose a well-constructed paragraph explaining who tends to vote the most and why.

21. Using all the data provided above, compose a well-constructed paragraph explaining who tends to vote the least and why.
(Answer Key)
Sources: U.S. Census, CNN, and Project Vote

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1. Which age group had the highest percentage of voters in all three years?

65–74

2. Which age group had the lowest percentage of voters in all three years?

18–24

3. Which year had the lowest total voter turnout?

2004
4. How did voter turnout change among voters age 18–24 from 2004 to 2008?

+6.6

5. How did voter turnout change among voters age 18–24 from 2008 to 2012?

−7.3

6. Do all registered voters actually vote? How do you know?

No. Percent of age group that voted (right-hand column) is lower than percentage of age group registered (middle column).

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7. Which gender had higher voter turnout in 2004 and 2008?

Female

8. Did that gender maintain higher voter turnout in 2012?

No

9. Which gender saw the greatest growth in turnout over the three elections?

Male

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Asian
14. Which racial group had the highest percentage of voters in 2012?  
   **Black**

15. Which racial group had the lowest percentage of voters in 2012?  
   **Asian**

16. Which racial group had the greatest increase in percentage of voters from 2004 to 2012?  
   **Latino**

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17. Describe the trend correlating household income with voter turnout.  
   *The greater the household income, the more likely you are to vote.*
### 2008

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18. Which educational level had the highest percentage of voters?

*Advanced degree*

19. Which education group had the lowest percentage of voters?

*No high school*

20. Using all the data provided above, compose a well-constructed paragraph explaining who tends to vote the most and why.

21. Using all the data provided above, compose a well-constructed paragraph explaining who tends to vote the least and why.
LESSON: COMMUNITY VOTING ANALYSIS

**Overview:** In this lesson students analyze the results of their community survey on voting as a basis for developing solutions to low voter turnout.

**Objectives:**

SWBAT

- Compile and analyze data from community voting survey
- Propose solutions for lack of voter turnout
- Write a persuasive essay

**Materials:**

- Chart paper with possible reasons for voter participation and non-participation
- Markers (one per student)
- Community Voting Analysis handout
- Voting Essay Assignment handout

**Assessments:**

- Community Voting Analysis
- Voting Essay Assignment

**CCSS:**

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Before the class enters the room, write two lists on separate sheets of chart paper or on the board if you have space. Label one list “Reasons for not voting” and the other “Reasons for voting.” Populate each list with following reasons:

**Reasons for voting:**

- Believes vote matters
- Doesn’t really think about it, just does it
- Sense of duty
- Strongly opposes a candidate
- Strongly supports a candidate
- Wants to have voice heard
- Other (please list reason)

**Reasons for not voting:**

- Apathy
- Dissatisfaction with candidates
- Forgot
- Illness or family emergency
- Non-citizenship
- Not informed about candidates
- Not informed about voting process
- Out of town
- Skeptical (thinks vote doesn’t count)
- Too busy
- Transportation issues
- Other (please list reason)

Hang the two lists in the room.
**BELL-RINGER: INITIAL TABULATIONS**
Have the students add up the number of their survey respondents who voted as well as how many didn’t vote. Next, have the students compare the reasons their survey respondents did or did not vote to the reasons posted on the chart paper. Have the students note any reasons that they don’t understand.

**BEFORE: TALLY OUR RESULTS**
Ask the students if they have any questions about the lists posted on the chart paper. Then, ask the students to give the total numbers they surveyed, total non-voters, and total voters. Have a student add the numbers to come up with a class total for each.

Give each student a marker. Have them put tally marks under each of the reasons for voting or not voting that they collected in their survey.

**DURING: ANALYZE THE DATA/ANALYZE THE SURVEY**
Have the students fill out the Community Voting Analysis sheet individually or with a partner. Once the students have finished their data analysis, have them share their results with the class. Make sure there is agreement on the top reasons why people in the community don’t vote according to their survey results. Have the students examine the possibility of flaws in their survey findings by asking, “Are there reasons people might not be honest about their voting? Is a self-reporting survey always reliable? Is there another way you could have gathered the data that would have yielded different results?”

**AFTER: PROPOSE SOLUTIONS**
As a class, brainstorm possible solutions for the reasons people in the community do not vote and write them on the board.

**CLOSER: EXPLAIN VOTING ESSAY**
Hand out and explain the Voting Essay Assignment.
Community Voting Analysis

Look around the room at the tallied results to answer the following questions. Remember that this analysis is based on a community sample. You did not survey the entire community, but the results should indicate some of the reasons people in your community do not vote.

1. How many people were surveyed?

2. Of that number, how many people voted? What percentage is that?

3. Of the people surveyed, how many did not vote? What percentage is that?

4. What are the top three reasons that people did not vote?

5. Are there potential problems with our survey? Could we have asked different questions and gotten a different result? Explain.

6. Given the reasons that some people gave for not voting, what do you think could be done to increase voter participation in the community?
Voting Essay Assignment

Some people in the U.S. feel that voting is a waste of time because they feel like nothing ever changes and all politicians are alike. Other people argue that voting is one of the most fundamental and essential ways to have your voice heard in a democracy. Is voting worthwhile or a waste of time?

In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.
LESSON: VOTER REGISTRATION AND TURNOUT (2 DAYS)

Overview: In this lesson, students will examine the requirements that Americans must meet in order to register and vote in elections, debate the merits and fairness of such requirements, and design their own ideal voter registration and election systems.

Objectives:
SWBAT
- Identify current requirements that make it difficult for some Americans to register and/or vote
- Take and defend a position as to the fairness of each requirement
- Design and evaluate various reforms meant to address present obstacles

Materials:
- LCD projector and laptop or DVD player and TV
- Electoral Dysfunction documentary
- What It Takes to Vote handout
- Stand and Declare signs
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Sticky notes
- Tape

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

Before students enter the room, post Stand and Declare signs around the classroom and write the following quote on the board:

“If you can’t vote, then you’re not free. And if you ain’t free, children, then you’re a slave.”

—Hosea Williams, Selma 1965

Bell-ringer: Written Reflection
Have the students write down their reaction to the Hosea Williams quote. Do they agree or disagree? Why?
BEFORE: STAND AND DECLARE

NOTE: Refer to the Stand and Declare activity in the “Power of Voting” lesson on page 2 for directions on how to facilitate the activity.

Do a Stand and Declare activity using the Hosea Williams quote and the statement “Voting is a privilege, not a right.”

DURING: WHAT YOU NEED TO VOTE

Explain that now that students have voiced their own opinion on this question, they are going to hear what some other people have to say on this matter. Show the first clip from Electoral Dysfunction, an award-winning PBS documentary on voting in America (accessible at https://vimeo.com/77945875, password vote1).

Ask the students, “Is voting guaranteed in the constitution?” (NOTE: While the 15th Amendment bans discrimination against voters on the basis of race and the 19th Amendment bans discrimination against voters on the basis of gender, the Constitution does not affirmatively give every American the right to vote. As a result, states get to set their own rules.) Explain that students will design a system that they think is fair. In order to do that, we need to better understand the current state of affairs.

Ask the students if they know who currently gets to vote in the United States. Answers should include that voters must be 18 and U.S. citizens. (NOTE: 20 states now allow 17-year-olds to participate in the nomination process for candidates, either through voting in primary elections or participating in party caucuses. In all of these states, 17-year-olds must be 18 by the date of the general election in order to participate in nominating procedures.)

Create two columns on one sheet of chart paper. Label one “What a voter needs to know” and the other “What a voter needs to have”. As a class, have the students brainstorm items that would fit in each category. If students have trouble, prompt them with questions such as, “Do I need to know where to vote?” If students offer general answers, encourage them to be more specific. For example, you might say, “So, a voter needs time. Is ANY time okay? Could she vote right now if she wanted?”

Make sure the students include the following on their lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What a voter needs to know</th>
<th>What a voter needs to have</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>when/where to register</td>
<td>a way to get there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when/where to vote</td>
<td>time (to register AND vote)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pose the question, “Should you need an ID to vote?” Have a few students share out yes or no, why or why not. Explain that this question has become very controversial in recent years, with many states passing laws that require a very specific kind of ID in order to vote.

Show the second clip from Electoral Dysfunction (accessible at https://vimeo.com/77946207, password: vote1). Have the students list arguments for and against ID requirements using the evidence offered in the video clip. (You may want to have them use a T-chart to organize their notes.)
AFTER: TENSIONS IN VOTING

After watching the video clip, have the students share their arguments for and against ID requirements. Discuss, “What factors might make it hard for some Americans to get an ID? Are identification requirements good because they are intended to limit fraud or bad because they discriminate against some citizens? Which concern takes precedence for you? According to the clip, are ID requirements effective at preventing voter impersonation or fraud?”

Revisit the quote from the beginning of class and close by asking students if/how that quote affects their thoughts on whether Americans should be required to have an ID in order to vote.
DAY 2
Before students enter the room, re-post the list of things that voters must know and have in order to vote.

BELL-RINGER: THINKING ABOUT OBSTACLES TO VOTING
As students enter the room, hand them three or four sticky notes. Have the students write their answers to the following question on their sticky notes: “What might make it hard for some people to know or get some of the things listed on this chart?”

BEFORE: SHARE OUT
Have the students share out their responses and then place their sticky notes next to the corresponding items on the chart.

DURING: DESIGNING A FAIR VOTING SYSTEM
Ask, “How do we design a voting system that is fair, democratic, inclusive, efficient, cost-effective, and that limits fraud? That is the question for you to answer. In small groups, you will be in charge of designing your own election system for your state.”

Divide students into groups and give each group a piece of chart paper and a What It Takes to Vote handout.

Each group should come up with a name for their state and write it on top of their chart paper. Post an example of the following chart on the board or LCD projector. Ask the students to copy it onto their chart paper and then fill in the blanks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>How</th>
<th>ID required?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voter Registration</strong></td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voting</strong></td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
<td>Proposal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
<td>Explanation:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students should brainstorm their own solutions to these problems, but can also use the What It Takes to Vote handout to see samples of what various states currently do.
AFTER: CONSIDERING VOTING SYSTEMS
Have student post their charts around the room and give each student as many sticky notes as there are groups. Have the students walk around to read the other groups’ proposals. For each plan, they should write one thing they like and one concern or question they have about it on a sticky note and attach it to the chart. Students should then return to their own chart and read the feedback they received. Ask for volunteers to share out something helpful that someone wrote about their plan.
What It Takes to Vote

Early Voting (By Mail and/or in Person): Thirty-two states provide some form of “no excuse” early voting, whether by mail-in absentee ballots or “Early In-Person” (EIP) ballots, permitting any registered voter to cast an early ballot. More than 50% of voters in these states favor early voting. The 2008 Presidential election demonstrated the overwhelming popularity of these policies as one out of every three ballots were cast early.

Same-Day Voter Registration: First utilized by Maine in 1973, Election Day Registration (EDR) is a voter registration rule that allows individuals to register and then to vote on Election Day. Though policies vary among the states that allow EDR, typical implementation involves the appearance of an eligible individual at his or her designated polling place, providing proof of identification and residency, filling out the necessary registration application and voting.

Voter ID Requirements: Many states have passed laws that require additional identification either at registration or voting. These laws vary from state to state in terms of what kind of ID is allowed; requirements range from proof of citizenship, government-issued photo IDs, any kind of photo ID, or a broad range of IDs not necessarily including a photo. For updates on voter ID requirements in all 50 states, visit www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/elections/voter-id.aspx.

Online Voter Registration: More and more states are taking advantage of existing and emerging technologies to improve how voters are registered. From the convenience of online voter registration applications, to the paperless transmission of application data between government databases, to community-based registration drives that employ electronic forms, paperless information technologies are allowing states and nonprofit voter registration organizations to increase efficiency, reduce errors, and realize significant cost savings.

Voter Registration at Public Agencies: In 1993, Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) often referred to as the “motor voter” law because it requires states to offer voter registration with driver’s license application and renewal. NVRA also requires states to offer voter registration opportunities to clients and applicants of public assistance programs such as Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid. Twenty years after the NVRA went into effect, only a handful of states are consistently complying with the requirement to offer voter registration services to clients and applicants of public assistance programs. In fact, voter registration applications from public assistance agencies declined by 79 percent between 1995–1996 and 2005–2006.

www.projectvote.org
EXAMINING CANDIDATES
LESSON: CANDIDATE BLIND MATCH

Overview: This lesson has students look at the positions of their candidates without any preconceived notions of what that candidate might stand for.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Examine candidates’ positions
• Identify which positions they most favor
• Reflect on their candidate choices

Materials:
• Candidate list (handout and overhead) (NOTE: This is not provided in this curriculum. The teacher will need to create this handout.)
• Candidate Positions handouts for each candidate with the names removed (NOTE: This is not provided in this curriculum. The teacher will need to create this handout.)
• Blind Match worksheet

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.10 Read appropriately complex texts.

Before class begins: For each candidate, create a Candidate Positions handout. Include short statements about his or her position on the same issue such as immigration reform. Do NOT include the candidates’ names on the handouts. Label each candidate a letter of the alphabet, such as “Candidate A.” (You might want to keep an answer key for yourself.) Mikva Challenge will post Candidate Positions for national elections at www.actioncivics.org/elections-and-campaigns.

Note to teacher: This lesson begins talking specifically about the election at hand. If you have not already done so, be sure to set aside time to introduce the current race to your students.

BELL-RINGER: WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
Distribute a list of the candidates running for office and have the students underline the names of all the candidates they have heard of. If they already support a candidate, have them circle that candidate’s name.

BEFORE: READING CANDIDATES’ POSITIONS
Have the students sit in groups of four. Explain the procedure for the round-robin reading:

Each group will get copies of one candidate’s position on a few key issues. The handouts will not have the candidates’ names on them, but will say “Candidate A,” “Candidate B,” etc. After reading the candidate’s position, students should individually fill in a box on the Blind Match worksheet, explaining whether they support the candidate or not and why. They should also write the candidate’s letter in the upper right box, leaving the name blank for now. (A model is provided.)

After a few minutes, announce it is time for groups to pass their Candidate Positions handouts to the group to the right and continue the process until they have read all the handouts. Variation:
You can post the candidate’s positions on chart paper around the room and have the students move around until they have read all of the candidates’ positions. You can also project the candidate’s position on an LCD projector.

**DURING: THE BIG REVEAL**

Ask the students to guess who each candidate might be. Reveal the names of each candidate and have the students fill in the candidate’s name on their *Blind Match* worksheet. For example, you might say, “Who do you think Candidate A might be? Candidate A is John McGregor.”

**AFTER: REFLECTION**

Students should respond in writing to the following questions:

1. Were you surprised by the positions of any of the candidates? Explain.
2. Were you surprised by your choice of candidate? Why?
3. What other factors, besides position on the issues, might have influenced your candidate choice before learning more about each candidate?

**CLOSER: EXPLAIN HOMEWORK**

Assign students to write a paragraph in which they describe how their voter values, ideology, and position on a specific issue have influenced their opinion of the candidates and which candidate they are most likely to support at this time.
# Blind Match

**EXAMPLE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td>I don’t support this candidate because he is against abortion and I support a woman’s right to choose. I also disagree with his position on immigration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support/don’t support this candidate for the following reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LESSON: QUALITIES OF A GOOD ELECTED OFFICIAL

Overview: Before learning more about each candidate, it is helpful to think about what information we get and where we get it from. This lesson has students learn how to evaluate sources, which helps them be a critical consumer of campaign media and information. If you are short on time, you can integrate the Examining Our Sources handout into the next lesson.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Identify qualities for a good elected official
• Examine the pros and cons of different sources of information about candidates
• Evaluate how voters can find accurate information on candidates

Assessment:
• Reflection

Materials:
• Sticky notes
• Examining Our Sources handout
• Candidates’ literature, newspaper articles on candidates, information about candidates from political blogs, information on candidates from non-partisan groups, and candidate endorsements (NOTE: This is not provided in this curriculum. The teacher will need to collect these materials.)

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Before the lesson begins: Create five different “stations,” one that includes at least one example of candidate literature, one for news media, one with blogs, one with non-partisan group literature, and one with endorsements. If possible, provide a variety of sources for each station (e.g., endorsements from the NRA and the Sierra Club).

BELL-RINGER: QUALITIES OF A GOOD ELECTED OFFICIAL

Explain to the students that electing a candidate to office is like hiring an employee. Have them think about what qualities they think an elected official should have in order to be good at his/her job. Give each student three sticky notes and have them write a quality of a good elected official on each.

BEFORE: QUALITIES WE VALUE

Write the following category headings on the board: education, experience, personal background, personality, looks, and other. Have the students post their sticky notes on the board under the category title that they think best fits each quality posted. Read all the qualities listed aloud.

Lead a discussion with your class using the following questions:
• How do you find out about each candidate’s qualities and positions? Is that a judgment call? What are you basing the judgment on?
• What if there are other things besides these qualities that a voter might want to know about the candidates in order to make an informed choice? (Think back to the voter values you chose yesterday as important.) Is it important how they conduct their personal lives? Should voters care about the candidates’ positions on the issues?

**DURING: EXAMINING OUR SOURCES**

Explain that in order to be informed about which candidate we want to support, we need to learn about the different candidates. Ask, “How do you know which information is trustworthy and which is not?” Explain that there are five stations around the room, each with information about a candidate from a different type of news source. Students will take turns visiting each station and completing the Examining Our Sources handout. Allow the students to spend a few minutes at each station to evaluate the source and then call time and have them rotate to the next station. Remind the students that for this activity, they are evaluating the sources, not the candidate.

After students have circulated through each station have them return to their seats and create a master list of pros and cons for each source. Use the completed handout for ideas.

**AFTER: REFLECTION**

Have the students write a response to the following prompt: “How can voters find out accurate information about the candidates in order to make an informed decision?”
## Examining Our Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidate’s literature</td>
<td><em>(website, brochures etc.)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News media</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.cnn.com">www.cnn.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.washingtonpost.com">www.washingtonpost.com</a></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• <a href="http://www.wsj.com">www.wsj.com</a></td>
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<td>• <a href="http://www.drudgereport.com">www.drudgereport.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.dailykos.com">www.dailykos.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com">www.talkingpointsmemo.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.redstate.com">www.redstate.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-partisan groups</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.votesmart.org">www.votesmart.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.factcheck.org">www.factcheck.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.politifact.com">www.politifact.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest group endorsements</td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.sierraclub.org">www.sierraclub.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.nra.org">www.nra.org</a></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.aarp.org">www.aarp.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Examining Our Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Candidate’s literature</strong></td>
<td>Potentially more detailed, with information about candidate’s position of issues.</td>
<td>Filled with spin—its purpose is to get you to support this candidate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(website, brochures etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News media</strong></td>
<td>While some news sources have political leanings (MSNBC—Democratic, Fox News—Republican), most work hard to be as objective as possible.</td>
<td>The sound bite—most news sources cut the position of a candidate down to seven seconds or less of airtime, hard to get into a lot of depth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blogs</strong></td>
<td>A wide diversity of voices on what’s happening.</td>
<td>The line between reporting and editorializing is significantly blurred. Don’t necessarily follow journalist rules of fact checking and sourcing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-partisan groups</strong></td>
<td>Provide detailed accounts of candidates voting records and speeches.</td>
<td>Requires the public to sift through the information themselves and form an opinion. Fewer and fewer candidates are participating in the surveys groups like Project Vote Smart produce. Covers mostly national elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interest group endorsements</strong></td>
<td>Provides advice and shortcut to knowing who represents your interests. “If I like A, and A likes B, then I should like B.”</td>
<td>Subjective. Often limited to one issue support. Can be broad and vague—you may differ on specific policy decisions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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LESSON: CANDIDATE PROFILES (MULTIPLE DAYS)

Overview: This lesson requires the students to conduct their own research on the candidates. The goal is for students to create a Voter Education Guide that can be printed and shared with the school and community.

Objectives: SWBAT
- Evaluate the candidates based on criteria established by students
- Evaluate sources
- Identify candidates’ positions on various issues
- Create an electoral guide

Materials:
- Candidate Profile—electoral guide version
- Candidate Notes worksheet
- The Candidate I Support Is handout
- Computers with Internet access

Assessment:
- Electoral guide

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over-reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

NOTE: If time is short or computer access is limited, you can provide candidate information to your students instead of having them conduct the research. Be sure to give them a packet of information from various sources (see “Qualities of a Good Elected Official” lesson for ideas) so they can continue to practice the skill of evaluating sources.

BELL-RINGER: VOTER EDUCATION GUIDE BRAINSTORM
Have the students respond to the prompt: “What information about a candidate does a voter need in order make an informed choice at the voting booth?”
BEFORE: CREATING A PLAN
As students share their responses from the bell-ringer, write their ideas on the board.

DURING: CREATING THE GUIDE (TIMES WILL VARY)
Assign students (independently, in pairs, or in small groups, depending on the size of the class and the number of candidates you wish to research) a candidate to research and distribute a Candidate Profile handout for them to fill out. The profile sheet has two issues identified and two left blank. Have the class decide what two issues they want to know more about their candidate's position.

Have the students visit a range of websites (see the “Qualities of a Good Elected Official” lesson on page 42 for ideas) to gather information on their candidates. Remind students that these are informative profiles, not persuasive profiles. Therefore, they should be neutral and objective.

When groups complete their section, they should switch papers with another group to proofread each other’s work. Assign a student to design a cover and another student to create a title page and table of contents.

AFTER: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR DISTRIBUTION
Facilitate a brainstorming session where students think about ways to get their Voter Education Guide into the hands of voters.

NOTE: The “Election 411” lesson (page 58) also suggests creating a Voter Education Guide with information on how to register and vote in your area. Consider combining these two projects. Suggestions on distribution are also available in the Taking Action section, “Creating and Distributing a Voter Education Guide” (page 117).

CLOSER: EVALUATING THE CANDIDATES
Students should read the profiles and complete the Candidates Notes chart and The Candidate I Support Is handout.
Candidate Profile

Create a candidate profile sheet as formatted below. Include as much of the following information as you can.

Political party:
Date of birth:
Place of birth:
Spouse:
Children:
Religion:
Education:
Political experience:
Other experience:
Home:

Explain the candidate’s position on the following issues (you may paraphrase or use direct quotes from the candidate’s website):

Education:

Guns:

_______________:

_______________:
# Candidate Notes

Read all of the Candidate Profile sheets. Then, complete the following chart by writing reasons to support and not to support each candidate. On the back of this paper, explain which candidate for each race you would campaign for and why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Reasons to Support</th>
<th>Reasons Not to Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name: __________________________________ Date: _________________

The Candidate I Support Is

_______________________________________________

Answer the following questions for the candidate you most support.

1. What are the demographics (age, race, gender) of the candidate?

2. Do these things factor into an individual’s ability to be effective in this position?

3. What other aspects of the candidate’s biography do you think will help the candidate perform in office? Explain. What aspects might limit the candidate’s performance in office? Explain.

4. Describe the work/leadership experience the candidate has.

5. Is the candidate’s experience relevant to the position he/she is seeking? Explain.

6. What is the candidate’s stance on the extra issues that the class chose as important? Do you agree with his/her position? Explain.

7. List three reasons you support this candidate:
# LESSON: VIEWING CANDIDATE DEBATES

**Overview:** Watching a debate can help students learn more about the candidates. It also provides an opportunity to explore substance versus style.

**Objectives:**
- SWBAT
  - Examine the issue of substance versus style in a debate
  - View a candidate debate
  - Reflect on what constitutes “winning a debate”
  - Evaluate candidate’s debate performance

**Materials:**
- Medium to view debate (TV/VCR or Internet/LCD projector)
- Candidate Scorecard worksheet
- Debate Rubric handout
- Debate Reflection worksheet
- Media Coverage of the Debate worksheet

**Assessments:**
- Debate Rubric
- Debate Reflection
- Media Coverage of the Debate

**CCSS:**
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

---

**BELL-RINGER: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WIN A DEBATE?**

Have the students write a response to the following prompt: “How does someone win a debate? Is it about their ideas, or about how well they speak and look?”

**BEFORE: SHARE OUT**

Have the students share their thoughts from the bell-ringer.

**DURING: VIEWING A CANDIDATE DEBATE**

Have your students watch the debate either in class, at a viewing party, or at home. If students are watching the debate live at home or together at a debate-watching party, we highly encourage you to have them tweet using a common hashtag (like presdebate2012) so they can share their thoughts and read others’ comments. This will also help you track their engagement and participation.

If you show the debate in class, a fun activity that gets students thinking about messaging is **Buzzwords Bop**. As a class, create a list of buzzwords or phrases that candidates will probably use such as “tough on crime” and assign a motion and/or noise to each buzzword. Break the class into groups so that each group has an assigned buzzword and corresponding motion/noise. When the buzzword is said, the appropriate group must make the corresponding motion/noise.
After the debate, debrief the activity. Ask students if some groups were more active when one candidate spoke, etc.

Alternatively, you can have the students keep track in the debate by using the Candidate Scorecard worksheet. Following the debate, have the students evaluate each candidate using the Debate Rubric handout.

**AFTER: REFLECTION**
Have the students complete the Debate Reflection worksheet.

**CLOSER: EXPLAIN HOMEWORK**
Distribute and explain the Media Coverage of the Debate worksheet that students will complete for homework.
Name: ___________________________________________  Date: _________________

**Candidate Scorecard**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate name</th>
<th>Things the candidate said or did that I liked</th>
<th>Things the candidate said or did that I didn’t like</th>
<th>Overall grade (A–F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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Debate Rubric

Use the following grading scale to rate the candidates in each area, then provide comments for each.

1 = poor  2 = fair  3 = good  4 = very good  5 = excellent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Candidate:</th>
<th>Candidate:</th>
<th>Candidate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the candidate focus in on the most pressing issues?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well did the candidate use facts and expert opinion to support his/her points?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the evidence support the candidate’s conclusions in a way that made sense?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rebuttal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the candidate effectively respond to the opponent’s counter-arguments?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the candidate speak in an organized, clear, and pleasant manner?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Candidate won this debate because

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Debate Reflection

1. How well did the candidates answer the questions?

2. What were some of the recurring themes and messages in the debate?

3. Were you surprised by anything in the debate? Explain why or why not.

4. In your opinion, who won the debate? Why?

5. Did the debate have any impact on your point of view of the candidates? In other words, do you feel any differently about any of the candidates after the debate?

Additional comments:
Media Coverage of the Debate

Pick a newspaper article or TV news broadcast covering the debate and complete the following questions using that source.

1. What is the name of the source (newspaper, TV broadcast, blog, etc.)?

2. What does the reporter/newscaster/blogger say about the debate?

3. Does the reporter mention the elements of the debate listed on your rubric: issues, evidence, reasoning, rebuttal, and delivery?

4. Does the reporter’s discussion of the debate match your own ratings? Explain.

5. What other criteria does the reporter use to evaluate the candidates’ debate performance?
LESSON: ELECTIONS 411 (MULTIPLE DAYS)

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to not only inform our students on the basics of the upcoming election, but to have them educate others.

Objectives:
SWBAT
- Identify key information regarding the upcoming election
- Educate others on the key information regarding the upcoming election

Assessments:
- PSA and/or Voter Education Guide

Materials:
- Election Basics Bingo handout
- Knowledge Is Power handout
- Storyboard template
- Video camera (optional)

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over-reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

Bell-Ringer: Elections 411

Option 1:
Give each student an Elections Basics Bingo card. Have them move around the room and ask their classmates to help them fill in the boxes. You can set this up as an individual competition (in which case the rule is that they need to give an answer to a classmate in order to get an answer) or a group activity with the goal of having everyone fill in all of the boxes.

Option 2:
Have the students generate a list of the questions they think people need to know in order to be educated and active voters using the Knowledge Is Power handout.

Before: What Do We Know? What Is Important To Know?
Depending upon which bell-ringer option you chose, lead a discussion where students identify what are they key pieces of information that people need to know in order to be active and in-
formed voters. Generate as many answers as you can to the questions, but the purpose here is not to go over every fact together as a class, but rather for students to scan the data and assess what they think is important for citizens to know and why.

Have the students highlight what they believe to be key pieces of information that all citizens should know. Ask them how many people they know are aware of that information. Ask the students ways that this information could be effectively disseminated.

**DURING: EDUCATING OTHERS**

Determine ahead of time whether the students will be creating a Voter Education Guide or a PSA or whether the students will have a choice. Explain that their goal is to educate others about the key information they identified in the bell-ringer.

Regardless of which format they are using (PSA or Voter Education Guide), have the students work in groups of three or four. Each group should either choose or be assigned a question or questions to research and present on. Students should easily be able to find answers to most of election and voting questions through their local Board of Elections website or www.vote411.org.

If students are creating a Voter Education Guide, you can share the example found at www.actioncivics.org. Depending on how much time you, you can have the students design their Voter Education Guides using various software. You may also choose to include the candidate profiles from the “Candidate Profiles” lesson.

If students are creating PSAs, you can show them examples created by Chicago students at www.lwvil.org/voter-video-minutes.html. Provide each group a storyboard template and explain that they should map out their 60-second PSA by drawing what the audience will see in each frame and describe what is happening under each drawing. (They don’t necessarily need to create a script.) Have the students practice and film their PSAs. Depending on how much time you have, you can have the students edit their PSAs using various software.

Remind them that their PSAs and Voter Education Guides are meant to educate the public and not sway them to vote for a particular candidate or party.

**AFTER: DISTRIBUTION**

We encourage you to have the students disseminate their Voter Education Guides and/or PSAs in the community. If students created candidate profiles in the Creating Candidate Profiles lesson, you may choose to combine them into one Voter Education Guide. Brainstorm with students on ways to do that. Some ideas include:

- Post the PSAs and/or Voter Education Guide to the school website
- Contact your local newspaper to see if the Voter Education Guide can be printed in or distributed with the paper
- Distribute the Voter Education Guide to places of worship, social service centers, community centers, etc.
- Distribute the Voter Education Guide with the free weekly in local businesses
• Distribute the Voter Education Guide and/or play the PSA at school events that parents attend
• Distribute the Voter Education Guide and/or play the PSA to school staff
• Contact your local cable company about posting the PSA
• Contact your local League of Women Voters or other civic organizations about posting the PSAs
• Post the PSAs on YouTube and start a social media campaign to drive viewers to the site
# Election Basics Bingo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO can vote?</th>
<th>WHO are the candidates?</th>
<th>WHAT offices are up for election?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE can you vote?</th>
<th>WHEN is the election?</th>
<th>WHY should people care about voting?</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW do you register?</th>
<th>HOW do you vote?</th>
<th>HOW do you campaign?</th>
</tr>
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</table>
Knowledge Is Power

Use the question stems below to generate questions of what information individuals need in order to be an educated and active voter.

WHO...?

Example: Who is running for office?

WHAT...?

WHERE...?

WHEN...?

WHY...?

HOW...?
LESSON: PRIMARIES, CAUCUSES, CONVENTIONS, OH MY!

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to provide an overview of a candidate’s electoral path-way. The information provided here focuses on the presidential pathway. You can, however, modify the information to fit any election (for example, leave out the information about the electoral college if your students are focusing on a local election). We have also provided video links to Civics-in-a-Minute videos explaining various processes discussed in this lesson. If you have access to online video through computers, tablets, or smart phones, you might choose that option.

Objectives:
SWBAT
- Describe the path to elected office

Assessments:
- A children’s book, a skit, a song, or a flow chart

Materials:
- OPTIONAL: computers with Internet access

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

BELL-RINGER: RUNNING FOR OFFICE
Have the students write “Start Campaigning” on the left side of a piece of paper. Then have them write “Winning a Presidential Election” on the right side. Have them draw a flow chart as best they can of the steps a candidate goes through to win an election.

BEFORE: ELECTION PATHWAYS
NOTE: The handouts give general information regarding the pathway to the presidency. You can modify them depending on the election your students are studying.

Divide the class into as many groups as the Elections Pathway handout topics you have chosen to cover. (We offer five topics.) Give each group a different Elections Pathway handout to read and discuss. Tell them to prepare to explain their topic to others.

DURING: PIECING IT ALL TOGETHER
Have the students in each group count off. Arrange new groups consisting of one student from each previous group based on their numbers. (For example, have all the ones from each group form a NEW group, all the twos from each group form a NEW group etc.) Each of the newly formed groups will consist of one member from each of the previous groups.
Have each person explain their *Election Pathway* handout topic to their new group.

Have the groups create a children’s book, skit, or flow chart to clearly demonstrate the steps a candidate goes through to win an election.

**AFTER: SHARING**

Have the groups share what they created and provide feedback to one another based on the clarity of their explanation and accuracy of information.
Election Pathway: Political Parties

A political party is made up of individuals who organize to win elections, operate government, and influence public policy. The United States Constitution does not formally address the issue of political parties. The founding fathers did not originally intend for American politics to be partisan. Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, wrote specifically about the dangers of domestic political factions (groups). In addition, the first President of the United States, George Washington, was not a member of any political party. The Democratic and Republican parties are currently the largest and most powerful parties in the U.S. A political party differs from a special interest group in that a political party runs candidates for office and a special interest group may support or endorse a candidate running for office.
Election Pathway: The Primary

Primary elections work similarly to a General Election. In general elections, voting is done through a secret ballot. Voters may choose from among all registered candidates in one party and write-ins are counted. There are two types of primaries, closed and open. In a closed primary, voters may vote only in the primary of the political party in which they registered. For example, a voter who registered as a Republican can only vote in the Republican primary. In an open primary, registered voters can vote in the primary of either party, but not both.

Primary elections also vary in what names appear on their ballots. Most states hold presidential preference primaries, in which the actual presidential candidates’ names appear on the ballot. In other states, only the names of convention delegates appear on the ballot. Delegates may state their support for a candidate or declare themselves to be uncommitted.

New Hampshire holds the first primary of the presidential campaign season.

OPTIONAL Video Link: www.takepart.com/video/primaries-vs-caucuses-civics-minute-video
**Election Pathway: The Caucus**

Caucuses are simply meetings, open to all registered voters in the party, at which voters in attendance divide themselves into groups according to the candidate they support. Undecided voters may congregate into their own group and prepare to be persuaded by supporters of other candidates.

Voters in each group are then invited to try to persuade others to join their group. At the end of the caucus, party organizers count the voters in each candidate’s group and use a formula to calculate how many delegates to the county convention each candidate has won. Iowa holds the first presidential caucus of the primary season.

Election Pathway: The Convention

In the summer/fall of every presidential election year, political parties in the United States typically conduct national conventions to officially nominate their presidential candidate. At the conventions, the presidential candidates are selected by groups of delegates from each state. After a series of speeches and demonstrations in support of each candidate, the delegates begin to vote, state by state, for the candidate of their choice. The first candidate to receive a preset majority number of delegate votes becomes the party’s presidential candidate. The candidate selected to run for president then selects a vice presidential candidate.

Delegates to the national conventions are selected at the state level, according to rules and formulas determined by each political party’s state committee. While these rules and formulas can change from state to state and from year to year, there remain two methods by which the states choose their delegates to the national conventions: the caucus and the primary.

OPTIONAL Video Link: www.takepart.com/video/what-are-presidential-nominating-conventions-civics-minute-video
Election Pathway: The Electoral College

Though the presidential candidates campaign as national figures, they are actually running in 51 separate races (the 50 states, plus Washington, D.C.). Instead of using the popular vote (the total number of votes cast for a particular candidate) to determine the winner, a candidate must win a majority of electoral votes. This method was designed by the framers of the Constitution to allow the states to select the president and not the people, as this would protect the electoral power of smaller states. What this means for the average citizen is that when they enter the voting booth to vote for a presidential candidate, they are actually voting for a slate of electors (delegates for the electoral college) affiliated with the party of the candidate, not the candidate.

Each state is assigned a number of electoral votes based on the population of the state. Washington, D.C. is also allowed three electoral votes in presidential elections, bringing the total number of electoral votes to 538. In order to win the election, a candidate must receive a majority, 270 electoral votes, to win. Electoral votes are awarded on a winner-takes-all basis in all but two states, Nebraska and Maine, which divide electoral votes proportionally based on the popular vote. What this means, is the candidate who receives the most votes in a state captures all the state’s electoral votes. For instance, when Barack Obama received more popular votes in Illinois than Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential election, he received all 20 of the state’s electoral votes.

OPTIONAL Video Link: www.takepart.com/video/electoral-college-civics-minute-video
Name: __________________________________ Date: ________________

**Election Pathway: The General Election**

Following the nominating conventions, each party’s candidate will face off against the others in a general election. In the general election, voters do not have to vote according to party affiliation and are free to select among the candidates on the ballot.

In the general election, voters are assigned to polling stations in their precincts (neighborhoods). When they arrive at the polling station, voters are offered a ballot. The ballot will list the selected party candidates in all the different races. A voter simply chooses one candidate for every office that is up for election. Votes are tallied by precinct.
LESSON: MONEY AND POLITICS (2 DAYS)

Overview: The rules around campaign finance are too complex to adequately discuss in two class periods. This lesson uncovers that complexity and should leave your students asking a lot of questions.

Objectives:
SWBAT
- Reflect on the election and debrief together
- Raise questions regarding campaign finance
- Define PAC and super PAC
- Examine the complex relationship between money and elections
- Answer the question “Does ‘money talk’ in elections?” using evidence

Materials:
- Sticky notes
- Money and Campaigns Overview handout
- Money and Campaigns Web Quest handout
- LCD projector and laptop with Internet
- Student computers with Internet (If you don’t have access to student computers with Internet service, go to the websites and print off the materials ahead of time.)
- Stand and Declare signs

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over-reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

BELL-RINGER: MONEY AND ELECTIONS
Give each student three to five sticky notes. Have them imagine that they have decided to run for office. Have them list one thing on each sticky note that they would need money for in their campaign.

BEFORE: MONEY AND ELECTIONS WEB
Write the word “campaign budget” on the board. Have the students come to the board in small groups to group their bell-ringer sticky notes around the word “campaign budget.” When all the sticky notes are posted, read the groupings aloud and readjust, if necessary.
If the students don’t mention the following, be sure to add:

- Access to voter file
- Ads
- Campaign events/appearances
- Field offices
- Staff
- Travel
- Website


### DURING: PACS AND SUPER PACS

Explain that most candidates spend a lot of money to get elected. Ask the students, “Where does this money come from?” Explain that individual donors can give directly to a campaign but there are limits to how much they can donate. (For more information see the Federal Election Commission’s contribution limits timetable at [www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contriblimits.shtml](http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/contriblimits.shtml) and the [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) graphic that depicts who gave how much to what Super PAC in 2012 at [http://tinyurl.com/mkvdy2b](http://tinyurl.com/mkvdy2b).)

Distribute the *Money and Campaigns Overview* handout and have the students do a close read of the text. In addition, or alternatively, you can watch a one-minute summary of super PACs at [www.takepart.com/video/what-super-pac-civics-minute](http://www.takepart.com/video/what-super-pac-civics-minute).

Explain that comedian Stephen Colbert created a PAC and a super PAC in the 2012 election to demonstrate the potentially undemocratic impact these organizations can have in an election. Show the approximately 8.5-minute *Colbert Report* videos where Colbert learns that he needs to disband his PAC due to potential corporate conflicts of interest ([http://tinyurl.com/3v59sqc](http://tinyurl.com/3v59sqc)) and he learns that he is legally entitled to create a super PAC instead ([http://tinyurl.com/3qqdnsr](http://tinyurl.com/3qqdnsr)). Students should write down any questions the clips raise for them. (For more information about how complicated the super PAC rules are, show the following *Colbert Report* videos: [http://tinyurl.com/6q2qs75](http://tinyurl.com/6q2qs75) and [http://tinyurl.com/7mdhm3](http://tinyurl.com/7mdhm3).)

### AFTER: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Revisit your “campaign budget” sticky note web from the start of class and have the students add any new information they learned. Ask if they have any additional questions.
DAY 2

BELL-RINGER: SILENT REFLECTION
Have the students write their thoughts to the following statement: “Money threatens our democracy by allowing wealthy people more influence in elections.”

BEFORE: STAND AND DECLARE
NOTE: Refer to the Stand and Declare activity in the Power of Voting lesson on page 2 for directions on how to facilitate the activity.

Conduct a Stand and Declare activity using the following statements:
• Money threatens our democracy by allowing wealthy people more influence in elections.
• The freedom to donate money to a candidate allows people and groups the opportunity to engage in democracy and should not be limited.

DURING: WEB QUEST
Explain to the students that they will be conducting an Internet research “web quest” to answer the question: Does money in elections threaten our democracy? Pass out the Money and Campaigns Web Quest handout and have the students complete the task using computers with Internet access. (If your students do not have access to the Internet, you can print information from the websites listed on the Money and Campaigns Web Quest handout for your students ahead of time.)

Enrichment/Extension: For additional information regarding money and politics refer to the following:
• PBS Learning Media has many good resources related to money and elections (http://tinyurl.com/jw6bzvf)
• Washington Post article explaining the Citizens United case (http://tinyurl.com/yhx9hnr)
• Antonin Scalia’s position in support of the Citizens United case (www.c-spanvideo.org/clip/3723986)
• C-SPAN video against the Citizens United case (www.c-spanvideo.org/clip/3859258)
• An extensive super PAC simulation (www.centerforactioncivics.org/elections-and-campaigns-lessons-activities). It is written to occur (mostly) out of class over several weeks, involve the whole school, and lead up to a school wide mock election on Election Day.

AFTER: SHARING OUR THOUGHTS
You can use a number of different strategies to assess student learning and to allow for student voice on the issue. You can facilitate a Socratic seminar or an impromptu debate, using evidence from their Money and Campaigns Web Quest research to support their response to the question, “Does money in elections threaten our democracy?” Alternatively, you could have the students prepare a written response to the question.
Money and Campaigns Overview

Supporting a candidate financially is one way in which people engage in the political process. Critics argue that without strict campaign finance rules, it is possible for wealthy individuals and corporate interests to have disproportionate influence in elections by pouring excessive amounts of money towards particular candidates. Campaign finance reform is an ongoing source of debate, focusing most recently on the procedures of PACs and super PACs.

WHAT IS A PAC?
A Political Action Committee (PAC) is a popular term for a political committee organized for the purpose of raising and spending money to elect and defeat candidates. Most PACs represent business, labor, or ideological interests and have existed since 1944. There are rules to how PACs can get and spend their money:

- PACs can give $5,000 to a candidate committee per election (primary, general, or special).
- PACs can give up to $15,000 annually to any national party committee.
- PACs can give $5,000 annually to any other PAC.
- PACs may receive up to $5,000 from any one individual, PAC, or party committee per calendar year.
- A PAC must register with the FEC within 10 days of its formation, providing name and address for the PAC, its treasurer, and any connected organizations.

WHAT ARE SUPER PACS?
Super PACs were deemed legal in the Citizens United Supreme Court case in which the high court ruled that corporations are like people; therefore, they deserve free speech, and can raise as much money as they want to back political candidates.

Super PACs, known formally as Independent Expenditure Only committees, are groups of people tasked with raising money for a particular candidate or cause, even though they are not technically affiliated with that person’s campaign. However, even though the super PACs are legally restricted from coordinating with the campaigns, the groups are often made up of former staff members from their candidates’ previous campaigns. Super PACs make no contributions to candidates or parties. They do, however make independent expenditures in federal races—running ads or sending mail or communicating in other ways with messages that specifically advocate the election or defeat of a specific candidate. There are no limits or restrictions on the sources of funds that may be used for these expenditures. These committees file regular financial reports with the FEC, which include their donors along with their expenditures.

Modified from www.opensecrets.org and www.pbs.org\newshour
Money and Campaigns Web Quest

Task: On a separate sheet of paper, answer the question “Does money in elections threaten our democracy?” Gather evidence from the sources listed below and make recommendations on how to reform our current system of campaign finance to ensure that it is fair and equitable.

Recommended websites to explore:
• www.opensecrets.org/resources/dollarocracy/
• www://tinyurl.com/770er2n
• www.opensecrets.org/pacs/toppacs.php
• www://tinyurl.com/7xkyshy
• www://tinyurl.com/lhwuzsz
• www.publicampaign.org/fair-facts
LESSON: CAMPAIGN GAME

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Examine the influence of money in campaigns
• Participate in a simulation of campaigning and voting
• Reflect on factors that impact elections

Assessment:
• Debrief reflection

Materials:
• Campaign money
• Index cards
• Chart paper
• Markers
• Candidate Speech Template handout
• Campaign office org chart

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

BELL-RINGER: REVIEW ISSUES
Have the students revisit the issues that they care most about and brainstorm things they think the next elected official (fill in the blank for whatever office is up for election) should/could do to address these issues.

BEFORE: IDENTIFYING CANDIDATES
Ask for three students to volunteer to run for office. Have candidates go to the back of the room and have them use the Candidate Speech Template to draft a stump speech in which they address the top two issues they would tackle and why people should vote for them.

DURING: FORMING PACS
Distribute vote cards and fake money to each student, explaining that in order to run for president, candidates need the support of the people. Citizens can show support in three ways: 1) by volunteering and convincing other voters to vote for the candidate, 2) by voting, and 3) by giving money to the candidate to use to reach out to voters. For this game, we are going to do options two and three.

Explain that each student has a vote. When the election comes up, they can vote for their favorite candidate. They also have money to give to the candidates. In order to maximize the impact of their money, students are going to form Political Action Committees (PACs). A PAC is a group of people that get together around an issue and support a candidate based on that issue. So, for example, if a student is really passionate about education, that student should get together with others who care about education, decide what candidate they think best represents their
interests, and then give a campaign donation. The more campaign donations a candidate has, the more votes they will be able to get and help them win the election.

Depending on your class size, set a maximum number of students who can be in one PAC so as to insure three to five PACs. Once a PAC is full, students must join/form a new PAC around a different issue.

Allow each candidate two minutes to deliver their stump speeches and then a few minutes to go around to the different PACs to shake hands and campaign. Candidates should talk to as many voters as they can to convince the voters to vote for them. They should also talk to the PACs and try to convince them to give them a campaign donation. PACs should tell the candidates how much money they have and explain the issue they care about.

**AFTER: DONATIONS AND VOTES**

Have all PACs donate their money to the candidates based on their interests. Go around and tally the PAC donations. The candidate with the largest amount of money gets **six extra votes**, the candidate with the second most amount gets **four extra votes**, and the candidate with the third most amount gets **two votes**. These votes will be added to the final vote tally during the election.

Allow candidates one last time to address their constituents and campaign for votes. Have voters use index cards to vote for a candidate. (NOTE: an individual voter can vote for someone different than the PAC they belonged to and donated to.)

Tally the votes and announce the winner with lots of fanfare!

**CLOSER: DEBRIEF**

Debrief the process using the following questions:

- How did you pick the candidate? Based on issue, personality, appearance?
- Why do you think the winner won? PAC support, lots of voters, money, etc.?
- What did you learn about campaigning from this activity?
Candidate Speech Template

Hi! My name is ____________________ and I am running for President of the United States.

1. If I am elected President, the first issue I would address is:

because:

I would address this issue by:

2. The second issue I would address is: ___________________ because:

I would address this issue by:

3. You should vote for me because:

Optional: Create your own campaign slogan such as “Change we can believe in!” or “Restore America now!”

Thank you!
Campaign Money
LESSON: DECONSTRUCTING CAMPAIGN MESSAGES AND PERCEPTIONS

Overview: This lesson focuses on analyzing the style and substance of campaigns in both free media, such as the news and televised debates, and paid media, such as TV commercials.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Analyze messages, images, and target audiences in advertising and political campaigns
• Compare and contrast advertisements and political campaigns

Assessments:
• Campaign commercials analysis
• Deconstructing Campaign Ads

Materials:
• Videos of candidate television commercials
• Examples of candidate ads (not included)
• LCD projector and laptop
• Tricks of the Trade handout
• Deconstructing Campaign Ads handout

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

NOTE: We recommend doing this lesson back to back with the following “Understanding the Electoral College” lesson. If you are not using the entire “Understanding the Electoral College” lesson, you can still have your students complete the During section—You Are the High Paid Media Consultant activity from that lesson to practice their media literacy skills.

BELL-RINGER: WHAT IS THE POINT OF ADVERTISING?
Ask the students to write a short description explaining advertising.

BEFORE: THINKING LIKE AN AD EXECUTIVE
Have the students share their responses to the bell-ringer and copy the following definition.

advertising: an action that attempts to persuade a target population to take some action, including purchasing a product
Ask the students to define what they think a target audience is and how that relates to advertising. Share an example of a commercial or print advertisement using an overhead or LCD projector. Ask the students to describe the images, identify the message, and identify the target. (You may want to model this first and repeat this process a few times with a few different examples.) Introduce the following vocabulary and have the students copy the following definitions.

- **Target audience**: a specific group of people for whom a message is created to influence or appeal to
- **Covert message**: a message that is not openly or obviously displayed
- **Explicit**: fully and clearly expressed or demonstrated
- **Implicit**: implied rather than expressly stated

**DURING: CAMPAIGN COMMERCIALS ANALYSIS**

Explain to the students that political campaigns use some of the same advertising strategies. Create a quick Venn diagram on the board and have the students compare advertising to campaigning in terms of message, image, and target.

Pass out the Tricks of the Trade handout and ask for student volunteers to read it aloud.

Have the students watch a variety of political campaign commercials and/or look at campaign print ads and logos and then complete the worksheet. You can locate contemporary campaign commercials on YouTube or on candidates’ websites. You can also access ads dating back to 1952 for presidential campaigns at www.livingroomcandidate.org.

**AFTER: STAND AND DECLARE**

**NOTE**: Refer to the Stand and Declare activity in the Power of Voting lesson on page 2 for directions on how to facilitate the activity.

Facilitate a Stand and Declare activity using the following statements:

- Negative advertising is effective.
- Political ads do more to confuse voters than inform them.
- Stretching the truth is acceptable if it helps win voters.
- People shouldn’t pay any attention to political ads.

**OPTIONAL HOMEWORK**

Distribute additional worksheets and have the students gather examples from newspapers, TV, radio, mailings, posters, etc. of campaign messages and complete their worksheet. We recommend giving the students a few days to complete this assignment.
Enrichment/Extension: Checking the Facts

www.factcheck.org does research to analyze the accuracy of every campaign ad in the presidential race. It is a well-respected nonpartisan website.

Ask the students to write a personal essay on one of the following questions:

- How does each candidate try to stretch the truth and why?
- Do ads that stretch the truth help or hurt the candidate with the voter?
- Does negative advertising work for candidates? Why or why not?
- Are voters good at detecting falsehoods in ads? Why or why not?

Campaign Ads In-Depth

www.pbs.org/30secondcandidate/front.html provides a good deal of information on political advertising, including a brief history, interviews with experts, and a step-by-step explanation of how media consultants take something from an idea and create an ad.

Campaign Ad Archive

www.livingroomcandidate.org provides an archive of presidential campaign ads dating back to 1952. Have the students compare campaign techniques over the years.

Digital Campaigning

## Tricks of the Trade

Here are some persuasive devices that advertisers and campaigners use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trick</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use catchy phrasing, slogans, and jingles that stick in the voters’ minds.</td>
<td>“We’re fired up.” (Obama campaign)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use celebrities for appeal and reputation.</td>
<td>Endorsements by other politicians and celebrities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stating opinions and conclusions in a factual matter to sound more convincing.</td>
<td>“John McCain has the type of experience we need for president.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling the opponent names.</td>
<td>“Hillary Clinton is a tax-and-spend liberal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using facts, statistics, percentages, and cost figures.</td>
<td>“Crime went down 56% under George W. Bush’s leadership while the economy rose 11%.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flattery designed to get the audience on the side of the candidate.</td>
<td>“I love being out here in Main Street America where the real America lives.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very general, abstract statements that can’t really be proven.</td>
<td>“No one knows Illinois better than Tom Smith.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using well-recognized images to portray certain emotions like trust and patriotism.</td>
<td>Candidate sitting with his or her family around a fireplace or candidate standing in front of an American flag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting the message that everyone is on board for this candidate. Also known as “bandwagon.”</td>
<td>“Americans who love their country are voting for Jones.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The repetition of key phrases, the candidate’s name, or images in print.</td>
<td>“JR Thorpe cares for Wisconsin. JR Thorpe cares for the environment. JR Thorpe cares for this country.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to fear and prejudice.</td>
<td>Connecting Obama to terrorists and claiming he is a Muslim played on fears of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branding a candidate with an image and a name.</td>
<td>Presenting a candidate as a “working class regular guy,” or “family guy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice of life view of the candidate, with activities from a typical day, aimed to build trust and appeal to voters.</td>
<td>Images of candidate doing daily activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A straight attack on the opponent.</td>
<td>“Jim Blobbo is a lying cheat.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deconstructing Campaign Ads

For each campaign ad, complete a box using detailed descriptions.

**Candidate:**

**Image(s)** What images does the campaign use to promote their candidate?

**Target** Who is the campaign trying to target with this ad? How do you know?

**Message** What does the campaign want you to think after viewing this ad? Don’t forget to consider covert or implicit messaging as well as explicit:
Candidate:

Image(s) What images does the campaign use to promote their candidate?

Target Who is the campaign trying to target with this ad? How do you know?

Message What does the campaign want you to think after viewing this ad? Don’t forget to consider covert or implicit messaging as well as explicit:
LESSON: UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (2 DAYS)

Overview: Students will become familiar with how the Electoral College works, particularly as it creates swing states in presidential elections. This lesson works well after Deconstructing Campaign Messages and Perceptions (page 81).

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Apply knowledge of the significance and value of the Electoral College in a campaign
• Role-play

Assessments:
• Electoral College Maps Online
• You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant! handout
• Essay

Materials:
• The Electoral College handout
• Electoral College Maps Online worksheet
• LCD projector
• Computer(s) with Internet
• You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant! handouts
• Electoral College Turns Presidential Elections into State-to-State Combat handout printed out from http://tinyurl.com/7sll3e8
• Electoral Dysfunction video

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1a Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

BELL-RINGER: ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE?
Have the students write a response to the following prompt:

Imagine our school wants to revise the current student dress code. Each homeroom gets one vote and must cast that vote based on which position (for or against school uniforms) gets the most votes from students in that homeroom. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this voting system?

BEFORE: DISCUSS BELL-RINGER
Have the students share their responses to the bell-ringer and discuss the possible dangers of majority rule. Have them consider majority rule and minority interests.
DURING: THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE
Show the clip from Electoral Dysfunction video available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/electoral-college-101.html?sa=X&ei=jq1NUvXAFoz6qAGS2oCABA&ved=0CAwQqwQ&r=0 (play from 1:37 to 3:40—the scene with the students voting on crayons vs. markers). Distribute The Electoral College handout. Have students volunteer to read the handout aloud while everyone highlights important elements in the text.

AFTER: MAPS ACTIVITY
Have the students go online to www.270towin.com and complete the Electoral College Maps Online handout.
DAY 2

BELL-RINGER: CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES VIDEO CLIP
Have the students watch the short video clip at http://tinyurl.com/87yqyng.

Alternatively, you can have the students read the Electoral College Turns Presidential Election into State-to-State Combat handout found at http://tinyurl.com/7sl3e8 or “Modern Elections Decided by a few States” from the Columbus Dispatch at http://tinyurl.com/p7t4trb.

The video and articles are from the 2008 election but the point about swing states is still relevant.

BEFORE: DEFINING OUR TERMS
Introduce the following terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>safe state</td>
<td>a state that is solidly expected to vote Democrat (blue state) or Republican (red state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swing state</td>
<td>a state that is leaning toward a particular candidate but the electoral outcome can be influenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>battleground state</td>
<td>a state whose electoral outcome is considered too close to call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask the students to explain how the Electoral College affects the way presidential candidates run their campaigns. Make sure they understand how swing states become battleground states and get a lot more attention than safe states.

DURING: BEING A HIGH-PAID MEDIA CONSULTANT
Divide the students into groups of four and explain that they will be acting as advisors to the communications director for a presidential candidate in the next presidential election. They can choose an actual candidate to campaign for or make one up. In their groups, they will have to develop a campaign strategy for a swing state.

Distribute a copy of You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant! to each group. Each group will have a sheet describing the demographic trends of Colorado, Florida, Ohio, or Virginia, all of which were all important swing states in the most recent presidential elections. Depending on how many students are in the class, multiple groups may be working on the same state.

Before groups get to work, review the handout and note that groups will pitch their campaign strategy by the end of class.

AFTER: STRATEGY PITCH
Have each group pitch their campaign strategy for the state they are targeting to the rest of the class. Have the class evaluate whether the strategy would be effective and why or why not.
HOMEWORK: ESSAY
Have the students write a short essay in which they take a position on the following prompt and use evidence to support their opinions.

Many critics have argued that the Electoral College is undemocratic because it makes certain states “more important” than others in a presidential election. Others argue that any voting system is bound to have problems and that the Electoral College attempts to balance the power between large states and small states. In your opinion, is the Electoral College a good system or not? Explain.
The Electoral College

HOW DOES IT WORK?
When U.S. citizens vote for president and vice president every election year, ballots show the names of the presidential and vice presidential candidates. However, they are actually electing a slate of “electors” that represent them in each state. The electors from every state combine to form the Electoral College.

Each state is given a set number of electors, based on the number of its U.S. congressional representatives + 2 senators. (The number of representatives in each state correlates with the state population and is amended every decade when the census is taken.)

Electors are typically strong and loyal supporters of their political party. Twenty-nine states require electors to vote as they have pledged, but the remaining electors can act as free agents—meaning they are not legally bound to cast their ballot for the party they represent.

After the election, the party that wins the most votes in each state appoints all of the electors for that state. This is known as a winner-take-all system. Currently, the only exceptions to this are in Maine and Nebraska.

The electors for each state cast their votes in mid-December, after which the votes are sealed and sent to the President of the Senate. On January 6, the President of the U.S. Senate opens all of the sealed envelopes containing the electoral votes and reads them aloud. To be elected as President or Vice President, a candidate must have an absolute majority (50% + 1) of the electoral votes for that position—270 electoral votes to win the presidency. The President and Vice President are then sworn in to office on January 20.

An election with no Electoral College majority could occur in two ways: if two candidates tie with 269 votes each or if three or more candidates receive electoral votes.

If no presidential candidate obtains a majority of the electoral votes, the decision is deferred to the U.S. Congress. The House of Representatives selects the President, choosing among the top three candidates, and the Senate selects the Vice President, choosing between the top two candidates. In the House selection, each state receives only one vote and an absolute majority of the states (26) is required to elect the President. (In this situation, Washington, D.C. would lose the voting power given to it by the 23rd Amendment since it does not have the same Congressional representation given to the states.)

WHY IS THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SET UP THIS WAY?
In 1787, it wasn’t at all clear whether democracy would work. In fact, “democracy” was a bit of a dirty word in some people’s minds: it raised fears of mob rule, which had happened in a few places during and after the Revolution. The United States was intended as a republic, in which the people would govern themselves only through elected representatives.

Because the role of the president was so important, most of the framers thought that the people couldn’t be trusted to elect the president directly. Instead, they should elect electors,
who would convene as a “college of electors” to consider the available candidates and pick the best person for the job.

Before the Revolution, the British colonists didn’t have much consciousness of being Americans. They may have identified themselves instead with the British Empire and with their own colonies. Even after the Revolution, loyalty to one’s state often still came first. The Constitution was intended to unite the states under a single national government—but not entirely. Small states like New Jersey feared that if they formed a union with the other twelve states, they’d be swallowed up under the influence of more populous states like Virginia and New York. Virginia and New York, of course, thought that they should have the most influence. That’s why the states have equal representation in the Senate but representation by population in the House of Representatives: it’s a compromise that allowed large states to get their due but still allowed small states to keep their identities and fight for their interests.

When it came to voting for president, the framers of the Constitution decided that the states should do the voting, not the people. Remember, there was no consciousness of the United States as a single nation; it was, literally, a union of separate states. So voting for president was to take place by state, so that each state could have its say. The compromise between big and small states was extended to the Electoral College, so that each state has as many electors as it has senators and members of the House of Representatives combined. Big states still have the most influence, but small states aren’t completely lost in the national vote.

**A WORK IN PROGRESS**

It was up to the states to decide how they ought to vote for their electors—and still is to a great extent. There is no national election for president, but rather fifty-one separate elections, one in each state and one in the District of Columbia.

Today, of course, every state allows citizens to vote directly for electors—as represented on the ballot by the candidates with which they are associated—but the electors are still not legally bound to vote for any particular candidate. An elector could, in theory, throw his or her vote to any candidate! Since each candidate has his or her own slate of electors, however, and since the electors are chosen not only for their loyalty but because they take their responsibility seriously, this almost never happens. (It last happened in 1988, when it had no impact on the outcome of the election.)

After the 2000 election when Al Gore won the popular vote but lost the election, the Electoral College was under a good deal of scrutiny. Efforts to reform the Electoral College system have been slowed by the political nature of amending the Constitution and the fact that each proposed solution introduces new complications and problems.

In addition to the 2000 election, there are 3 other instances when a candidate won the popular vote but lost the election. They were: 1824, Andrew Jackson vs. John Quincy Adams, 1876, Samuel Tilden vs. Rutherford B. Hayes, and 1888, Grover Cleveland vs. Benjamin Harrison.

*Modified from Fairvote.org*
Electoral College Maps Online

Log on to your computer and go to www.27towin.com. Answer the following questions.

1. Name the four states that currently offer the most electoral votes.

2. In 2008, how many of those states voted for Obama?

3. In 2012, how many of those states went for Obama?

4. In 2012, Obama received approximately how much more of the popular vote than Romney?

5. Name one state that would have won Kerry the entire 2004 election if he had won it. (Click on Margin of Victory view to see how close he was to winning that state.)

6. Name one state that would have won Gore the entire 2000 election if he had won it.

You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant!

The communications director for a major presidential candidate for the next election has just hired you as an advisor. Your job is to come up with a convincing campaign strategy for Colorado, one of the swing states in the next election. Analyze the information on Colorado and come up with a main message, a target audience and the type of media (radio ads, newspaper ads, billboards, social media, etc.) that will appeal to targeted voters in this state. You may choose to target a particular swing voter (considered an unpredictable voter who has no allegiance to either party).

**COLORADO**

Colorado has a huge influx of transplanted knowledge (white collar) workers and working-class (blue collar) Latinos. The key swing voters here may be Latinos, soccer moms (white suburban women), and independents. Almost 1/3 of Coloradans say they are independent voters not aligned to any party. Independent voters often like “anti-Washington” candidates.

White Population: 70%  
Black Population: 3.8%  
Asian Population: 2.8%  
Latino Population: 20.7%*  
Other: 2.8%  
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level: 9.1%  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Candidate Who Won Colorado</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Bob Dole (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Bill Clinton (D)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In the census, Latino is considered a culture, not a race. Latinos can identify racially white or Black, which is why the percentage total adds up to more than 100%.
Your task is to develop a campaign communications strategy and be prepared to pitch it to your candidate and his/her advisors. Things to include in your pitch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target audience(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the priorities/interests/concerns of this target audience?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What about your candidate would appeal to this target audience?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your message?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What forms of media will you use to get your message out to your intended audience and why have you chosen those forms of media?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be prepared to present your pitch!
You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant!

The communications director for a major presidential candidate for the next election has just hired you as an advisor. Your job is to come up with a convincing campaign strategy for Florida, one of the swing states in the next election. Analyze the information on Florida and come up with a main message, a target audience and the type of media (radio ads, newspaper ads, billboards, social media etc.) that will appeal to targeted voters in this state. You may choose to target a particular swing voter (considered an unpredictable voter who has no allegiance to either party).

**FLORIDA**

Florida is a state with a lot of retirees, a lot of Cuban immigrants, and a wide mix of people and incomes. To win Florida, candidates try to be strong on Cuban issues and Israeli defense (a lot of Jewish retirees live in the state). They also try to appeal to the large number of independents. Key swing voters here may be the retirees concerned about cost of living and health care costs.

White Population: 79.8%  
Black Population: 15.9%  
Asian Population: 2.3%  
Latino Population: 21.0%*  
Other: 6.5%  
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level: 13.3%

**Past Presidential Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Candidate Who Won Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Bill Clinton (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>George H. W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tbody>
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<td>What are the priorities/interests/concerns of this target audience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about your candidate would appeal to this target audience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your message?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What forms of media will you use to get your message out to your intended audience and why have you chosen those forms of media?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be prepared to present your pitch!
You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant!

The communications director for a major presidential candidate for the next election has just hired you as an advisor. Your job is to come up with a convincing campaign strategy for Ohio, one of the swing states in the next election. Analyze the information on Ohio and come up with a main message that will appeal to targeted voters in this state. You may choose to target a particular swing voter (considered an unpredictable voter who has no allegiance to either party).

OHIO

Ohio is a “Rust Belt” state that has lost hundreds of thousands of factory jobs in the past 30 years to cheaper overseas manufacturing. Voters here are mostly pro-gun and right-to-life on abortion. Young voters could be the swing voters in Ohio with over 2 million eligible to vote (ages 18–29). Young voters find the economy and the cost of college two of their most important issues.

White Population: 84.8%  
Black Population: 12.0%  
Asian Population: 1.6%  
Latino Population: 2.6%*  
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level: 13.3%

Electoral votes = 20

Past Presidential Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Candidate Who Won Ohio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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*In the census, Latino is considered a culture, not a race. Latinos can identify racially white or Black, which is why the percentage total adds up to more than 100%.
Your task is to develop a campaign communications strategy and be prepared to pitch it to your candidate and his/her advisors. Things to include in your pitch:

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<tr>
<th>Target audience(s)</th>
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<td>What are the priorities/interests/concerns of this target audience?</td>
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<td>What about your candidate would appeal to this target audience?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What forms of media will you use to get your message out to your intended audience and why have you chosen those forms of media?</td>
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Be prepared to present your pitch!
You’re the High-Paid Media Consultant!

The communications director for a major presidential candidate for the next election has just hired you as an advisor. Your job is to come up with a convincing campaign strategy for Virginia, one of the swing states in the next election. Analyze the information on Virginia and come up with a main message that will appeal to targeted voters in this state. You may choose to target a particular swing voter (considered an unpredictable voter who has no allegiance to either party).

VIRGINIA

Virginia is a mix of conservative religious voters, pro-military and gun advocates, and a fast-growing population of more liberal knowledge (white-collar) workers who live in Northern Virginia near Washington, D.C. The key to this state may be in turnout of the base. If high numbers of African Americans and liberals are excited and vote at 60–80% rates, Democrats should win. If religious and pro-military voters turn out at that rate, Republicans should win.

White Population: 73.0%     
Black Population: 19.9%     
Asian Population: 4.9%     
Latino Population: 6.8%*     
Percent of Families Below the Poverty Level: 10.2%     

Electoral votes = 13

Past Presidential Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Candidate Who Won Virginia</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Barack Obama (D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>George W. Bush (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Bob Dole (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>George H.W. Bush (R)</td>
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*In the census, Latino is considered a culture, not a race. Latinos can identify racially white or Black, which is why the percentage total adds up to more than 100%.

© Mikva Challenge 2014
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Be prepared to present your pitch!
LESSON: REDISTRICTING 101

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

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Describe the process of redistricting
• Discuss the multiple ethical and political decisions involved in the redistricting process
• Analyze the impact of redistricting on campaigns and on the composition of Congress

Assessments:
• Redistricting Chicago handout
• Mapmaker vs. Voters handout

Materials:
• Redistricting 101 handout
• Redistricting Chicago handout
• Computer and LCD projector (optional)
• Mapmaker vs. Voters handout

CCSS:
• CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

BELL-RINGER: INTRO TO REDISTRICTING
Either show the video found at www.redistrictinggame.org (approximately 1 minute long)

OR

Have the 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

Either way, ask students, “What do you think the quote means?”

BEFORE: SHARE OUT
Have the students share their thoughts from the bell-ringer.

Ask the students what map is being referred to in the bell-ringer? What are voting districts? How are they decided?
DURING: UNDERSTANDING REDISTRICTING

Divide students into groups of five and distribute the Redistricting 101 handout. Read the definition of redistricting aloud. Have the students read the handout in their small groups, highlighting and underlining the key points as they go.

Have the students watch “The Redistricting Song” video (found at www.propublica.org/article/video-the-redistricting-song) and complete the Mapmaker vs. Voters sheet. Have the students discuss their answers.

AFTER: REDISTRICTING CHICAGO

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

CLOSER: 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?
Redistricting 101

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.


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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. Thirty of the wards will be consolidated to five new wards. They have asked you—the redistricting expert—to redraw the district lines.

Here are some things to consider when you redistrict Chicago:

• In the 30 wards that will be consolidated, 18 of them have a majority of Cubs fans and 12 have a majority of White 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.

• You have data that suggests that White Sox baseball team is most likely to bring more money to Chicago—after all, they've won the World Series in the last 100 years!

How will you redistrict Chicago?

Directions: Consolidate the following 30 wards to five new wards by dividing the map into five 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.

<table>
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# of new wards: ____ Sox wards ____ Cubs wards 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 one positive result and one negative result of redistricting Chicago the way you did:

Positive: _______________________________________________________________________

Negative _____________________________________________________________________
Mapmaker vs. Voters

Directions: For each question below (on the left), write the letter of the correct answer (on the right) after watching “The Redistricting Song” video.

1. How many Representatives does the United States have? _______
   A. Keep communities together
2. How many congressional districts does the United States have? _____
   B. 435
3. What are two principles that the song says should guide the redistricting process? __________ and __________
   C. Grouping people of the same race together
4. When are the lines re-drawn? ______
   D. Moving an elected official out their district, by drawing their home into another district.
5. What is packing? ______
   E. Grouping people from the same party together
6. What is cracking? ______
   F. After the Census, every 10 years
7. What is kidnapping? ______
   G. 50
8. What is bleaching? ______
   H. Dividing people from the same party or race into different districts
   I. Equal population in each district

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

9. What message is the “The Redistricting Song” video trying to send?

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

---

LESSON: ELECTION DAY

Overview: This lesson provides some ideas of ways to engage your students on Election Day.

Objectives:
SWBAT
- Reflect on their experience participating in the electoral process
- Predict the winners of the election
- “Vote” for candidates
- Watch the election results

Materials:
- Mock ballots for the election labeled “My Predictions” and “My Vote”
- Reflection forms (see “Taking Action” section)

Assessment:
- Reflection

CCSS:
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

BELL-RINGER: PREDICTIONS
Give the students two mock ballots for the election, one labeled “My Predictions” and one labeled “My Vote” and have them mark their predictions of who will win the election as well as who they choose to vote for.

BEFORE: TALLY THE VOTE
Have two students volunteer to tally the “My Prediction” and “My Vote” ballots. Have the students compare the results.

DURING: FOLLOWING THE NEWS AND TAKING STOCK
If your students participated in any of the actions listed in the next section, this would be a good time to reflect on their actions. (See the Campaign Reflection worksheet in the “Taking Action” section.)

Alternatively, you could bring in newspapers, listen to talk radio and/or go online and have the students follow how the media is framing the election. What are the big stories being covered?

AFTER: ELECTION RESULTS
You can have the students follow the election results that evening and use Twitter (or create a blog with a forum function) to stay connected. Have the students tweet their thoughts as they watch the election results by using a common hashtag like #lincolnhsvote2015.
Mock Ballots

My Voting Predictions:

My Vote:
LESSON: POST-ELECTION DAY

Overview: The purpose of this lesson is to have the students consider Election Day as the beginning rather than an end of their political engagement.

Objectives:
SWBAT
• Define their expectations for the newly elected officials first 100 days
• Commit to future engagement in the political process

Materials:

Assessment:
• Elections Are Only the Beginning worksheet

BEFORE CLASS: Write the results of the election on the board.

BELL-RINGER: ONE WORD
Have the students write one word to describe how they feel about the results of the election.

BEFORE: OUR WORDS
Have the students share their words and write them on the board.

DURING: ELECTION RESULTS ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING
Write the statement “Elections are only the beginning” on the board and ask the students what they think it means. Facilitate a discussion, explaining that getting candidates elected is only the beginning. Now the candidates have to be held accountable to follow through on the promises they made during the campaign. Distribute an Elections Are Only the Beginning handout and have the students complete it.

AFTER: SHARE OUT
Have the students share their thoughts from their Elections Are Only the Beginning worksheet.
Elections Are Only the Beginning

What the elected official should do in his/her first 100 days:

What I will do to make sure that my voice continues to be heard:
Mikva Challenge believes the best way to learn civics is to “do civics.” This Action Civics approach centers on giving students opportunities to take action during the campaign season. In this section, we offer suggestions to help you facilitate and reflect on these powerful learning experiences with your students.

- Campaigning
- Getting Out the Vote
- Registering Voters
- Creating and Distributing a Voter Education Guide
- Being an Election Judge

**NOTE:** Most of the Taking Action experiences listed in this section would likely qualify for service learning credit in most school districts and service programs.
TAKING ACTION: CAMPAIGNING

There is no better way for students to get an inside view of the political process than to volunteer for a campaign and reflect on their experiences. But whether you take a class trip to a few campaign offices, or have the students campaign outside of school time on their own or in small groups, you will want them to prepare for their experience ahead of time. We have, therefore, included pre- and post-experience handouts to use with your students.

Campaigning Preparation

Divide students into groups of ten and spread groups around the room. In each group, students should line up facing each other—five on one side, five on the other, with a fair amount of space in between pairs so they can talk without disturbing each other.

One side of each group will play the role of a voter. Give each student in the voter group an index card that describes the way they will respond to the campaigner when they come to their “door.” Responses can include:

- “I am not interested.”
- “Thanks, but I always vote for the other party.”
- “I don’t vote.”
- “How does your candidate feel about (pick an issue)?”
- “Why are you campaigning, you’re not even old enough to vote?”

The other side of each group will practice campaigning for the candidate they have chosen to support. Give each campaigner group different reasons why they might support a candidate, including:

- “I care about ____________ and my candidate cares about this issue.”
- “I like the candidate’s experience and leadership.”
- “I support the candidate’s position on __________________.”
- “The candidate and I share similar views on what the U.S. needs.”

Explain that each campaigner will be given one minute to make his/her pitch. Once the activity starts, there will be a lot of talking at once. Remind the students to try to keep their voices low so everyone can hear each other.

Allow one minute for the first round of door-knocking. Allow for feedback and reflection. Ask, “Were you persuaded? Why or why not? What did the campaigner do well? What shouldn’t they have done?” Have campaigners move down the line to the next “voter” and begin another minute of campaigning. Continue until the five campaigners in each group have “knocked on all the doors.” Then have voters hand their index card to the student standing across from them. Have the campaigners become the voters and have the voters practice their campaigning until they have completed all five rounds.

NOTE: We recommend that you escort your students to the different campaign offices their first time.

Campaign Reflection

We have included a basic Campaigning Reflection sheet for your students to complete each time they campaign. You can use this form as a way to keep track of your students’ experiences when they are campaigning outside of classroom time. They also can form the basis of a final reflective essay. Ask your students to complete the form at the end of their campaigning experience.
Preparing for Campaigning

Step One: Figure out where you are going.

Candidate: ______________________________
Office address: ________________________________
Phone Number: _____________________________

Step Two: Call the office. Let them know you are interested in helping them campaign and ask them the following questions:

What is the name of the volunteer coordinator? ________________________________
What types of tasks do they need help with? ________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Tell them what you’re interested in doing: ________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Set up an appointment to go to the office so you know that they are ready and waiting for you.

Date: ___________ Time: _____________

**Consider going with a friend. It is more fun!
Tips for Campaigning

There are many different things you might do when you volunteer for a candidate including: stuffing envelopes, data entry, making posters, phone calling, handing out flyers, and speaking with voters door to door. Whatever you do, you should have a clear idea of why you are supporting your candidate so you can speak eloquently and convincingly. The campaign office will prep you but it is always good to know what to expect and be prepared.

Prepare what to say (the campaign office will give you a talk sheet as well):

- What is it about this candidate that makes you support him/her?
- Personalize your message. (Campaign slogans are not nearly as powerful as a personal, heartfelt message.)
- Why is this election important?
- Why are you campaigning even though you’re not old enough to vote?
- Which of the candidate’s issues is most important to you and why?

Take:

- Ask for literature (e.g., flyers, pamphlets) to hand out or leave at someone’s door if they are not home.
- If there is still time to register to vote, write down the registration information to give to those voters who haven’t registered to vote.
- Write down the campaign website and phone number so you can share them with people who want more information.
- A pen

Talk to voters:

- Go with a partner.
- Be upbeat! Smile.
- Trust your instincts—if you have a bad feeling about a particular block or house, skip it. Never put yourself in danger. Do not go inside anyone’s home.
- Some people may be rude. Expect this. You are representing your candidate so being rude back is not an option. BE POLITE at all times.
- Some people will be in a rush, not home, or unwilling to talk. Having literature (flyers, pamphlets) to hand out or leave at someone’s door if they are not home is useful.
- Don’t make stuff up! While you should know some things about the candidate you are supporting, you are not expected to know everything. If there is something you are unsure of, refer the voter to the campaign website and phone number. Note their question and tell them that someone will get back to them. Make sure you share their question with the campaign office.
- If you encounter a very supportive voter, ask if they would be willing to volunteer. Give them the campaign office’s phone number and take down their contact information and share it with the campaign office.
Name: __________________________________ Date: _________________

Campaigning Reflection

Name: _______________________________________________________

Candidate campaigned for: _______________________________________

Hours spent campaigning: __________

Volunteer coordinator signature: ________________________________

Circle all the activities you participated in while working in the office.

Canvassing       Phone banking       Visibility       Other:

1. Give a brief summary of the activity you participated in below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. If you talked to voters, why did people say they were going to vote for your candidate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Why did people say they were not going to vote for your candidate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
4. How did you try to convince them?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

5. What was the most positive part of the experience?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

6. What was the least positive part of the experience?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

7. What did you learn from campaigning?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

8. Would you recommend this experience to a friend? Why or why not?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
**TAKING ACTION: CREATING AND DISTRIBUTING A VOTER EDUCATION GUIDE**

In the preceding lessons students researched essential information every voter should know and compiled information on the candidates (Elections 411 and Candidate Profiles). We encourage you to take that information and create a voter education guide for distribution in the community. Some possibilities for distribution include:

- Getting the administration to post it on the school website
- Contacting the local newspaper to see if it can be printed in or distributed with the paper
- Distribute to local places of worship, social service centers, community centers, etc.
- Distribute with free weekly newspapers in local businesses
- Distribute at the start of school, orientation, or other school events that parents attend
- Distribute to school staff

**Voter Education Guide Reflection Questions**

- Why is it important to educate voters about where, when, and how to vote?
- What was the best thing about making the Voter Education Guide?
- What was the most challenging thing about making the Voter Education Guide?
- How hard was it to distribute our guides?
- What would you do differently next time?

**TAKING ACTION: REGISTERING VOTERS**

A great way for students to engage electorally is for them to register themselves to vote if they are eligible. (In some states, 17-year-olds can vote in the primary if they will be 18 at the time of the general election.) There are a number of good resources for registering students, including Rock the Vote's Democracy Class lesson ([http://democracyday.com/sign-up-pre-2012.html](http://democracyday.com/sign-up-pre-2012.html)).

In addition to registering students, your students could register people in their community. Before you begin planning to register voters, be sure to contact your local Board of Elections or the League of Women Voters to find out the state/county voter registration laws. Such laws vary significantly from state to state and it is important that your students’ voter registration drive is in compliance.

We suggest holding a voter registration drive after school, during lunch, at a school function (such as a sporting event), and/or during report card pick-up day. Recruit two to four volunteers to staff a table in a well-trafficked area and don’t forget to have pens handy and a sign identifying your table.

**Registering Voters Reflection**

- How did it feel to register to vote?
- Do you intend to vote in the next election?
- How did it feel to register others to vote?
- What was the most rewarding part of the experience?
- What was the most challenging part of the experience?
TAKING ACTION: GETTING OUT THE VOTE
Getting registered voters to the polls on Election Day is another action your students can do. They can make posters, phone bank, door knock, and create GOTV PSAs to be played in school or on local cable access networks. They can do this on their own or they can join a campaign office, political party, or another organization’s GOTV campaign.

Getting Out the Vote Reflection
- How did it feel to work a GOTV campaign?
- Would you do it again?
- What was the most rewarding part of the experience?
- What was the most challenging part of the experience?

TAKING ACTION: BEING AN ELECTION JUDGE
Forty states and the District of Columbia allow young people to serve as paid election judges on Election Day. The details vary, so contact your local Board of Elections to find out how your students can participate. You can find more information at http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Student_Election_Judges.
APPENDIX

To find additional elections resources including embedded links to all the websites listed in the Elections in Action curriculum organized by lesson and topic, go to www.actioncivics.org/election-resources/.