

Activity Title: Kid Reporters in Action

Grades: 1-3 *

Overview

This activity is intended for younger students, Grades 1-3, although it could be adapted for upper level students. The focus of this lesson is on learning about how voters make their choices in the Presidential Election. In this lesson the **students become interviewers** and go out to the community (parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, principal, soccer coach, community spiritual leaders, etc.) to discover the most important election issues in their community. The questions could also include whom these adults are planning to vote for and why. Elementary students will learn the basic steps of choosing a president: how people decide whom to vote for, and what issues are most important in their communities. By reporting on the election themselves, students will also get to understand the process of how the campaign is reported in the news media and in polls because those are based in questioning eligible voters.

Teachers help the students design an interview sheet and each student creates and illustrates a PowerPoint slide with their own interview results. All the student slides get assembled in a single PowerPoint presentation which can be shared in several ways.

*Easily scaled to higher grade levels

Essential Questions

- * What are the issues that voters think are most important?
- * Why do voters support one candidate or another for President?
- * Do the results of the election reflect the desires of the citizens in our community?
- * Why would a eligible voter not vote?
- * Does one person's vote make a difference?
- * Can the answers of ____number of voters predict who will win the election?

National Standards

What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?
What is Government and What Should It Do?

Objectives

- * Forms of participation. Students should be able to describe the means by which citizens can influence the decisions and actions of their government.
- * The meaning of citizenship. Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- * Political leadership and public service. Students should be able to explain the importance of political leadership and public service in their school, community, state, and nation.

Teach the Presidential Election: A range of technology-infused classroom activities, resources, and tools are **available for free** at GrowingVoters.org, a non-partisan educational effort to enliven and motivate student engagement in the political process. Professor Jo-Anne Hart is the project creator with support from *Lesley University* Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA: Hart@Lesley.edu

* Responsibilities of individuals. Students should be able to explain why certain responsibilities are important to themselves and their family, community, state, and nation.

* Selecting leaders. Students should be able to explain and apply criteria useful in selecting leaders in their school, community, state, and nation.

Activities

I. Prepare for the Interviews

1. Before the first interview, the class will discuss elections: Why do we hold elections? Who runs in an election? Why do people vote? What are the issues that adults vote on in elections? Who are the people they vote for? Students should be aware of President, Vice President and perhaps Governor, Senators, Representatives depending on the grade level. How many people vote in our country? (Discuss our huge population and introduce information about large numbers.) Optional: distinguish for students who has authority over whom. For example, one second grade teacher using this GrowingVoters.org activity reports his students' biggest question was, "If the president comes here, does he tell the mayor what to do?"

2. Building Background Knowledge

Students may view the *Growing Voters* listed websites in order to build background knowledge about citizenship and help students understand the voting process. For example at the Brain Pop this site students may view a movie about elections; at the PBS site try out "Inside the Voting Booth". <http://pbskids.org/democracy/classic/vote/>

II. Design, Practice, and Conduct Interviews

Design: The class will brainstorm ideas for questions that will appear on a class interview sheet. Create a simple interview sheet to help students be successful. The person being interviewed should be asked to read (or help read) the question and guide the student in marking down the interview answers. For young students, interview sheets should be easy to fill out. Circle the answer may be the best approach: i.e. Are you planning to vote Yes or No?

Interview sheet may include questions such as -What do you think is the most important issue in the upcoming election? (Example choices: Schools, Jobs, Crime, Health Care, Terrorism) and Who do you think our next President should be?

III. Practice by Role Playing

Invite to the class the Principal, another administrator or teacher (or other adult well known to the students). Using the class interview sheet allow some students to interview the guest while the teacher demonstrates how to fill in the interviewing form.

Students will practice reading and using the form by interviewing a partner in the classroom (or another class).

Students will use the interview form to interview adults at home. Encourage younger students to ask the adult to help them fill in the interview sheet the class created. Be sure the student has a pencil to mark the interview sheet.

IV. Results of Interviews

Student Discussion as interview results come back to class

- * What are today's answers for a good reason to vote for someone?
- * Why are there so many different reasons for voting for the same person?
- * How should Americans select their leaders?
- * From these interviews, which candidate do you think will win?

Have students report on their results:

1. Students can **each make one single PowerPoint slide** describing the key results of their interviews. Teachers can use a simple template for each student to fill in. They must decide what the important story, issue, or result was in their work. Students can work in pairs to create PowerPoint slides if desirable. Optional: invite the students to illustrate their interview slide. Either scan a drawing they made to represent their interview, or using available digital technology to make an illustration for their slide.

2. The teacher can assemble the slides from the **whole class into a single PowerPoint** presentation on key issues in the election. This can be uploaded onto the web where it can be shown to other classes. It can also be added to a school newspaper or announcements venue for comments and collaboration. As desired, this can be simulate "news story format" as election coverage from students.

3. Students can also **voice record the results** of their interviews into their PowerPoint slide.

This activity has clear extensions into written and oral communication. It could also be used to bring other language narration into the picture.

4. Students could role-play TV reporters and **tape video reports** on their interview results. Use a web-cam or video camera. These clips can be added to the PowerPoint or put together in a video to show students reporting on key issues in the election.

4. Keeping Track of Interview Results

Teachers can create a classroom spreadsheet titled Results of Interviews on a computer. (Note: Teachers should set this list up as a spreadsheet to make graphing the answers easier.)

Students will bring their completed forms to school and add their adults' interview answers to the class list on the computer.

Class discussions about polls, predictions and numbers are then available using the students own collected data.

The class can predict the outcome of the November vote and then compare the actual results.