

## **Growing Voters and Election 2008: Grades: 1-3**

### **Activity Title: Kid Reporters in Action**

#### **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, teachers, principal, soccer coach, etc.) to discover the most important election issues and 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.

#### **Essential Questions**

- \* Why do voters support one candidate or the other for President?
- \* Do the results of the election reflect the desires of the citizens in our community?
- \* Does one person's vote make a difference?
- \* Can the answers of \_\_\_\_ number of voters predict who will win the election?
- \* How is it possible that the majority of people interviewed voted for X, yet Y won 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.
- \* 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.
- \* 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
- \* The meaning of citizenship. Students should be able to explain the meaning of citizenship in the United States.
- \* Functions of government. Students should be able to explain some of the major things governments do in their school, community, state, and nation.
- \* Fundamental values and principles. Students should be able to explain the importance of the fundamental values and principles of American democracy.

## **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.)

#### 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”.

### **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 the correct answer. For young students, interview sheets should be easy to fill out. Circle the answer may be best approach.

Interview sheet may include questions such as -What do you think is the most important issue in the upcoming election? (Example choices: Education, Economy, Crime, War with Iraq/Afghanistan, Health Care. Terrorism) and Who do you think our next President should be?

**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 Principal 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.

#### IV. Results of Interviews

##### Student Discussion as interview results come back to class

- \* Which of today's answers is 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?
- \* Discuss why the classes' answers are different.
- \* 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. 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.
  
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 blog for comments and collaboration. As desired, this can be simulate "news story format".
  
3. Students can also **voice record the results** of their interviews (reading their PowerPoint slide) using a free online tool  
Go to <http://voicethread.com/about/>  
Free sign-in for educators.  
(note a microphone is needed for this tool)  
Teachers can upload the whole class presentation and individual students can narrate their own portion. This will be stored online and the website URL can be distributed so the students can show their work and have the option to collaborate across classrooms and schools.  
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.

**Presidential Election 2008 Interviews** Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1	Score
<b>Working with Others</b>	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others.	Usually listens to, shares, with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in class.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not on task.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often not on task.	
<b>Contributions</b>	Routinely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A definite leader who contributes a lot of effort.	Usually provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A strong group member who tries hard!	Sometimes provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. A satisfactory group member who does what is required.	Rarely provides useful ideas when participating in the group and in classroom discussion. May refuse to participate.	
<b>Attitude</b>	Never is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Always has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Rarely is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Often has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Occasionally is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Usually has a positive attitude about the task(s).	Often is publicly critical of the project or the work of other members of the group. Often has a negative attitude about the task(s).	
<b>Pride</b>	Work reflects this student's best efforts.	Work reflects a strong effort from this student.	Work reflects some effort from this student.	Work reflects very little effort on the part of this student.	
<b>Problem-solving</b>	Actively looks for and suggests solutions to problems.	Refines solutions suggested by others.	Does not suggest or refine solutions, but is willing to try out solutions suggested by others.	Does not try to solve problems or help others solve problems. Lets others do the work.	
<b>Preparedness</b>	Brings needed materials to class and is always ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials but sometimes needs to settle down and get to work	Often forgets needed materials or is rarely ready to get to work.	
<b>Quality of Work</b>	Provides work of the highest quality.	Provides high quality work.	Provides work that occasionally needs to be checked/redone to ensure quality.	Provides work that usually needs to be checked and redone to ensure quality.	