

# Who Should Be Our Next President?

A collaborative technologically integrated Presidential Election Unit asks this question to students across the land.

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## ***Introduction***

The overarching goal of this project is to take students, through the use of technology, on a journey towards complete understanding of the electoral process. A journey that has students of various ages working with others on either side of them, down the hall, or across town, and even with geographically distant, previously unknown students. A journey where they see what the election means to them as well as to others in their communities, and potentially, through the eyes of these distant other students in the country.

## ***Overview***

The following lessons are intended to be part of a technologically integrated curriculum on the Presidential Election of 2004. Although this activity focuses on the 2004 election, any election from the past would be appropriate for this unit.

The lessons combine development best practices with the elements of empowering technology. The lessons are not merely technical wizardry, but rather a weaving of what we know works well: students presenting to and collaborating with students. Technology, such as net meeting, email, blogs, digital photography, video and web cams support the extension of what we know works across geographical boundaries.

In each set here, a solid Social Studies Lesson will be augmented with technology to engage the students in collaborative work. An option to extend the lesson to engage students in different geographical areas is included. Students will do research on the various candidates for the office of President of the United States. Students from different geographical areas can collaborate together to develop this research.

This lesson unit requires that several pieces of technology be available to both the students and teachers. The teachers are assumed to be conversant in the use of the technology, and it is assumed that at least one of the sites has the technical infrastructure expertise required.

The students will create multimedia presentations. These can be as simple as PowerPoint or as complex as video clips. The students will view their presentations as well as the presentations of other students from a web-based interface. Moreover, older students will make multimedia presentations to younger students.

The project is timed to begin with teacher collaboration in September and run through the week of the election. The culmination of this activity will be all students- on line - participating in voting and taking an exit poll about why they voted as they did.

## **The Basic Lesson**

For simplicity, the project involves 3 schools: A, B, and C, 3 grades: grade 2, grade 5, and grade 9. Again, for simplicity, only 5 political parties or fewer will be investigated. More grades could be involved without changing the structure of the lessons.

Grade 5 and grade 9 classes will be broken up into groups, with each group owning the investigation and presentation of a particular candidate and party. Each group will research their party and candidates, and create a multimedia presentation about their candidate to present to the rest of the class. Each group will collaborate with the corresponding group in the other schools. These presentations will be integrated into a whole presentation describing the parties, the candidates, and the election process. Students should consider the essential questions when researching their party and candidates.

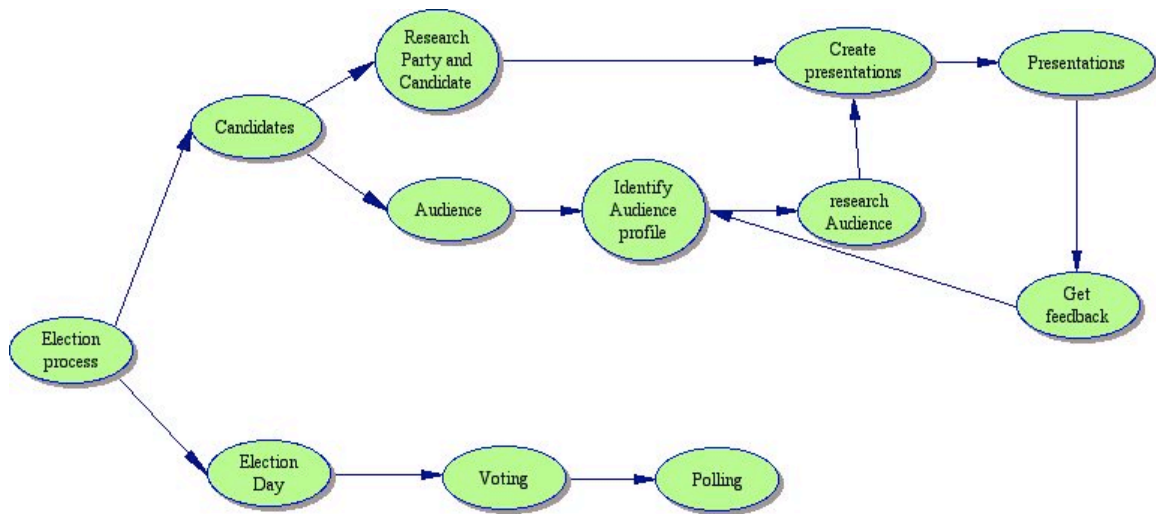
Grade 9 classes will present to a sister school grade 9 class. They will investigate the issues from their sister school's perspective.

Grade 5 students will keep scrapbooks of presidential candidates. Many students are already scrapbooking on paper and with electronic sources. They would have fun with this and learn at the same time. Students will bring in magazine articles from home. Students will also search the web on their own to find items for their scrapbook.

The students in the higher grades will also be sharing their party presentations with the students in the lower grades. The lower grade students will ask the older students about the political parties and the candidates. After the presentations, classes will discuss and reflect on what they have learned about the political parties in the United States.

The teachers will collaborate on and facilitate the creation of the presentations to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate.

## Inspiration diagram



## Grade 9: Presidential Election Lesson Plan

### The Essential Question:

Who should be our next President?

### Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

#### *What understandings are desired?*

Students will understand:

- That Americans choose who they are going to vote for in the presidential election based on a variety of reasons including personal beliefs, political party affiliation, the candidate's past political performance, and the candidate's/party's vision for the future of the country.

- The issues and platforms of each of the 5 parties to be studied in this unit, as well as the candidates running for presidents in each of these parties: Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Greens, and Independent/Reform.

***What essential questions will be considered?***

- Why are there different political parties in the United States?
- What is the history behind the formation of each party that the students will be studying?
- What are the ideas and issues that each party promotes?
- What issues in the upcoming election affect their community in particular?
- What issues in the upcoming election affect students in particular?
- What is the job of a president once he/she gets elected? What is the job of the vice president?
- What do the candidates stand for and what are their visions for the future?
- What does it mean to be a presidential candidate?
- What kinds of activities do they take part in? (Debates, campaigning, speeches, etc.)
- Why are there only 2 major parties in the United States?
- Who can vote in America?
- Where do members of your household vote and what is needed to vote?
- Why might American citizens choose not to vote in elections?

***What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?***

- Students will research and learn about the 5 parties listed above and the parties' presidential and vice-presidential candidates and find out their positions on important issues in the election.
- Students will research and learn about the origins and histories of these 5 political parties and why they were formed.

**Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence.**

***What evidence will show that students understand?***

- Group discussions
- Observations of productive teamwork
- Presentations within each class and to other classes
- Proficient use of PowerPoint or another Multimedia product
- Ability to knowledgeably and thoughtfully answer questions from the audience following the presentation

***What understandings/goals will be assessed through this task?***

- What do the parties and candidates stand for and historically why were the parties formed?

***What qualities must students' work demonstrate to signify that standards were met?***

- Thoughtful comparisons between the political parties and the candidates in the national election
- The ability to clearly explain the positions and issues that each party champions.

***Through what authentic performance task will students demonstrate understanding?***

- The students will form 5 groups, one for each of the designated candidates.
  - Each group will carefully and thoroughly research its party and candidate.
  - Special attention will be paid to:
    - How the issues in the upcoming election effect their community and the community of their sister school.
    - How the issues affect students in particular.
  - Each group will work collaboratively to gather information with the same candidate group from the other schools via email and possibly with a teacher-facilitated net meeting.
- The class will generate 3 questions for each of the major candidates and email them to the candidates.
- The class will create a multimedia presentation that will be presented to their class, the students in their sister school, and the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in their school. The presenters will use their presentations to inform students about the parties and candidates.
- The students will listen to the feedback of their classmates and their sister school and modify their presentation accordingly.

It will be developed in two stages.

- Stage 1
  - Each group prepares a presentation for the class with
    - The position of its candidate on the major issues
    - A picture that was either scanned in or taken off the Internet.
    - Include the candidate's age, political party, hometown and a few other facts that they have learned about the candidate
- Stage 2
  - The separate presentations will come together into one that will be put on the web site for all to see. The presentation will include:

- Introduction to class –Who the class is.
  - A class picture, if that is appropriate, and the teacher’s name.
  - Introduction to Presentation–
    - A brief overview about the election process and the job of the president
  - Compare and contrast the major candidates
    - Combine the presentations of each group and refine as a class
  - The questions the class sent to the candidates
  - The answers if they are available and appropriate
  - A conclusion showing what the class as whole learned.
- 
- Students will facilitate the presentation to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Students will view the presentations of all the 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes and participate in the blog for the web site.
  - The students will listen to everyone’s feedback and modify their presentation accordingly.
  - The students will vote and take the poll
  - After all the presentations, the class will discuss its voting results and reflect on what it has learned about the political parties in the United States.

***What student products/performances will provide evidence of desired understandings?***

- Cooperative and productive group discussions
- Analysis of issues in the national election that affect students
- Multimedia presentation

***By what criteria will student products/performances be evaluated?***

- Students will be assessed on their group work and multimedia presentation using rubrics.

## Polling and voting

The culmination of the activities will be a vote on the candidates by each student involved in the unit. This poll will be conducted online and the results will be shown in real time. Teachers will collaborate in the initial stage of the Unit to define the polling questions.

The students will also be asked to complete a poll that indicates why they voted for one candidate over another. (A possible variation of this activity is to have the students design the survey and load the questions onto the website to then be answered.) There are many different question types that can be used in the survey: multiple choice, one answer and open-ended questions. There are free websites that will host a survey. [Zoomerang.com](http://Zoomerang.com) was used to create the survey reproduced below. If teachers and students rebuilt this survey on Zoomerang.com it would be up on the internet for free to use for 10 days. (Note the timing issue of when desirable for students to take the survey and get the results before the survey expires.)

**The Presidential Election 2004**

1  
Vote for the President and Vice President

President George Bush / Vice President Dick Cheney

President John Kerry / Vice President John Edwards

2  
What do you like most about George Bush?

3  
What do you like most about John Kerry?

4

What information helped you to decide to vote for George Bush or John Kerry?

5

What are the priorities of George Bush?

6

What are the priorities of John Kerry?

7

What major changes will George Bush or John Kerry make in the next year?

Additionally, other information might be useful to collect. For example,

- Demographic questions:
  - Grade level and age of respondent
  - Gender
  - State and/or district
  - Ethnic and racial background
  
- Probing questions:
  - Whose thoughts and preferences helped you make this choice?
    - The opinions and preferences of friends and classmates?
    - The opinions and preferences of your parents?
    - The opinions and preferences of teachers?
    - The opinions and preferences of other adults?
    - Someone else's opinions and preferences?
  
- What source provided most of the information you evaluated in making your choice?
  - Newspaper articles and editorials
  - Radio advertisements
  - TV advertisements
  - Information received via email
  - Information you sought and retrieved from the internet
  - Conversations with students and teachers in school
  - Conversations with friends outside of school
  - Conversations with family

### ***Grade 9 Presidential Presentation Rubric***

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>Outstanding “Wow!”</b>	<b>Very Good “Well Done!”</b>	<b>Satisfactory “You made it!”</b>	<b>Weak “Needs Work”</b>
<b>Research and Note taking on Presidential Candidate</b>	Group members researched different information sources and recorded facts independently.	Group members recorded some information from different sources of information with minimal help.	Group members recorded very little information and failed to record the data correctly without some teacher assistance.	Group members could not complete the information slides without one on one teacher assistance.
<b>Presidential Facts</b>	Group put five or more facts about each presidential candidate into their PowerPoint without teacher assistance.	Group put at least four facts about each presidential candidate into their PowerPoint with minimal teacher assistance.	Group put at least three facts about each presidential candidate into their PowerPoint with some teacher assistance.	Group could not put any facts about each presidential candidate into their PowerPoint without one on one teacher assistance.
<b>Presentation</b>	The presentation is organized, clear and easy to	The presentation is organized, clear and easy	The presentation is somewhat organized. It	The presentation is not clear or

	follow. It draws the audience in with its graphics and layout. Minimal teacher assistance was needed to complete the presentation.	to follow. It is attractive and colorful. Some teacher assistance was needed to complete the presentation.	has few graphics that draw the audience in. Teacher assistance was needed to complete presentation.	organized. It lacks graphics. Continual teacher assistance was needed to complete presentation.
<b>Content</b>	The content is written clearly with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.  Information is accurate, current and comes mainly from primary sources.	The content is written with a logical progression of ideas and supporting information.  Includes some information from primary sources.	The content is not clear and does not create a strong sense of purpose. Some of the information may not seem to fit. Teacher assistance was needed.  Primary source use is not always clear.	The content lacks a clear point of view and logical sequence of information. Information is incomplete, out of date and/or incorrect.  One on one teacher intervention was needed.
<b>Text / Font</b>	The fonts are easy-to-read and point size varies appropriately for headings and text.  The background and colors enhance the readability of text.	Sometimes the fonts are easy-to-read, but in a few places fonts, color or busy background takes away from the readability.	Overall readability is difficult with too many different fonts, dark or busy background.	The text is very difficult to read with lots of text and small point size of fonts, inappropriate contrasting colors, poor use of headings
<b>Citations</b>	Sources of information are properly cited without any teacher assistance.	Sources of information are properly cited with minimal teacher assistance.	Sources of information are cited with some teacher assistance.	Sources of information are not properly cited without continual one on one teacher assistance.
<b>Graphics and/or Animation</b>	Graphics and/or animation are used on each slide to enhance the presentation.	Graphics and/or animation are used on at least 3 slides to enhance the presentation with minimal teacher intervention.	Graphics and/or animation are used on at least 3 slides with some teacher assistance.	Graphics and/or animation could not be used without continuous one on one teacher assistance.
<b>Writing Mechanics</b>	The text is written with no errors in grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.	The text is clearly written with little or no editing required for grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Minimal teacher intervention is needed.  (2 or more errors)	Spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors make it difficult to read without some teacher intervention.  (3 or more errors)	Errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage and grammar make the project unreadable without one on one teacher intervention.  (more than 5 errors)
<b>Teamwork</b>	Group members helped one another, shared ideas, shared the workload and managed problems without teacher intervention. The project is clearly a group effort.	The group members divided tasks, shared the workload and managed problems with minimal teacher assistance.	The group occasionally helped one another but required teacher assistance to resolve differences.  Not all of the group members contributed	The group required continuous teacher assistance with dividing tasks and resolving differences.  One person documents that



## Resources

### General

#### [American On Line @ School](#)

*Meet the candidates, check out the election calendar, rate a campaign site, evaluate a platform, and join a mock election.*

<http://www.aolatschool.com/features/elections/2004/index.adp>

#### [American Village: Mock Election Resources](#)

*Many lesson plans and resources for mock elections, about voting and keeping track during election day.*

<http://www.americanvillage.org/mockresources.shtml>

#### [Bush-Cheney '04](#)

*Official campaign website for President Bush.*

<http://www.georgebush.com>

#### [C-Span Congress Guide: Election 2004](#)

*Read each candidates view on the issues of the election.*

<http://www.capwiz.com/c-span/e4/dnet/?gridid=57361>

#### [C-Span Election Coverage](#)

*Extensive site with all kinds of information. Includes positions, ads, histories etc.*

<http://www.c-span.org/classroom/govt/campaigns.asp>

#### [CyberBee's Election Lessons](#)

*There are lessons and websites about the Process, the Candidates, and the Issues.*

<http://www.cyberbee.com/election/election.html>

#### [Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index](#)

*Great website sponsored by Slate.com. Contains dozens of editorial cartoons updated daily. Also includes cartoons organized in themes for easy comparison.*

<http://cagle.slate.msn.com/politicalcartoons/>

#### [Democratic National Committee](#)

*DNC's official website*

<http://www.democrats.org/>

#### [GOP.Com:Republican National Committee](#)

*Official website of the Republican Party*

<http://www.rnc.org/>

#### [History Central.com](#)

*Timeline of the Election 2004. Includes biographies on Bush and Kerry. Read speeches and presentations they have given throughout election 2004.*

<http://www.multied.com/elections/2004.html>

#### [History of US](#)

*Past into the future. Includes timelines, history of presidents, speeches, etc.*

<http://www.historyplace.com/>

#### [John Kerry for President](#)

*Official site for Senator Kerry's presidential campaign.*

<http://www.johnkerry.com>

[League of Women Voters](#)

*Voter information, find out about the issues and the candidates.*

[http://www.lwv.org/voter/voter\\_information.cfm](http://www.lwv.org/voter/voter_information.cfm)

[Libertarian Party Home Page](#)

*Official website for the national Libertarian Party.*

<http://www.lp.org/>

[Library of Congress](#)

*This Library of Congress website is an excellent resource for the American presidential election with information on candidates, voters, the party system, and the election process.*

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/election/home.html>

[Nader for President 2004](#)

*Ralph Nader's official website.*

<http://www.votenader.org/>

[Politics Selector](#)

*Good website to use when trying to sort out political beliefs. Includes a 2004 presidential candidates selector. Section of Select Smart, an online questioning site that allows the user to answer questions to help them decide issues etc.*

<http://www.selectsmart.com/politics.html>

[The Living Room Candidate](#)

*Contains dozens if not hundreds of presidential campaign commercials from 1954 to today, including third party commercials and internet commercial. Allows you to study the evolution of campaign commercials. Includes different category organizations so similar commercials can be studied together.*

<http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php>

## **Additional – Grade 9**

[<http://www.uselectionatlas.org/>](http://www.uselectionatlas.org/) *This Atlas of US Presidential Elections has a wealth of information about past and present elections.*

[<http://www.cyberbee.com/election/platforms.html>](http://www.cyberbee.com/election/platforms.html) . *This website has good activities and websites to learn about the platform issues. See the C-Span link. It's good for finding each candidates opinions about the issues.*



[<http://www.aolatschool.com/features/elections/2004/index.adp>](http://www.aolatschool.com/features/elections/2004/index.adp) *--meeting the candidates, timeline of events by year/month/day, doing a mock election, and more.*

[<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/election/primary.html>](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/election/primary.html) *--describes the election process of the president and vice president in the primary election, general election, electoral college --many other items such as voting registration and reason behind the date of the election.*

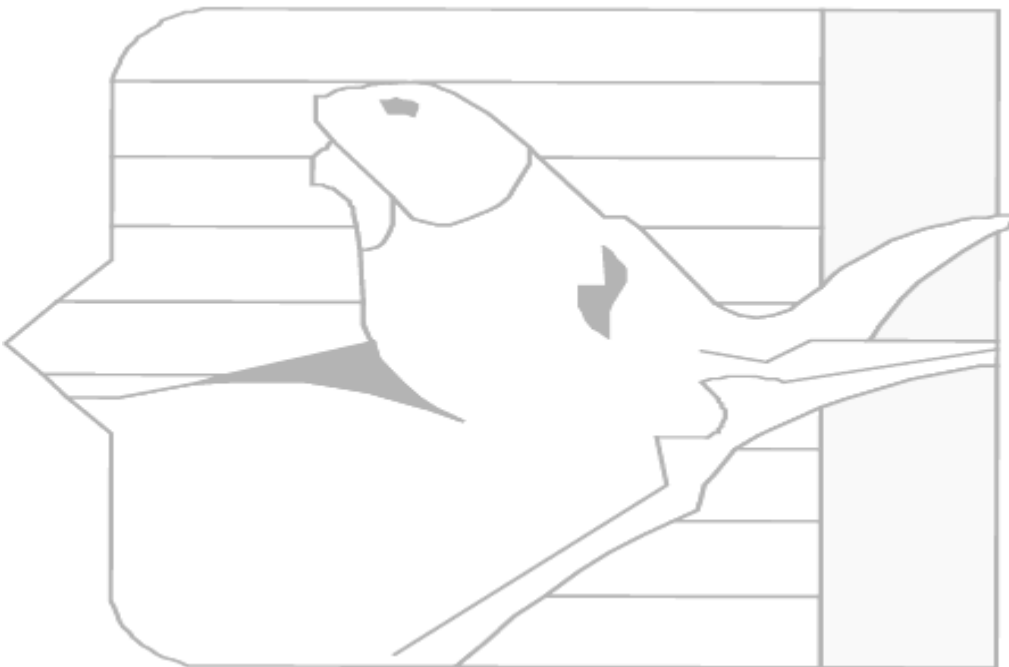
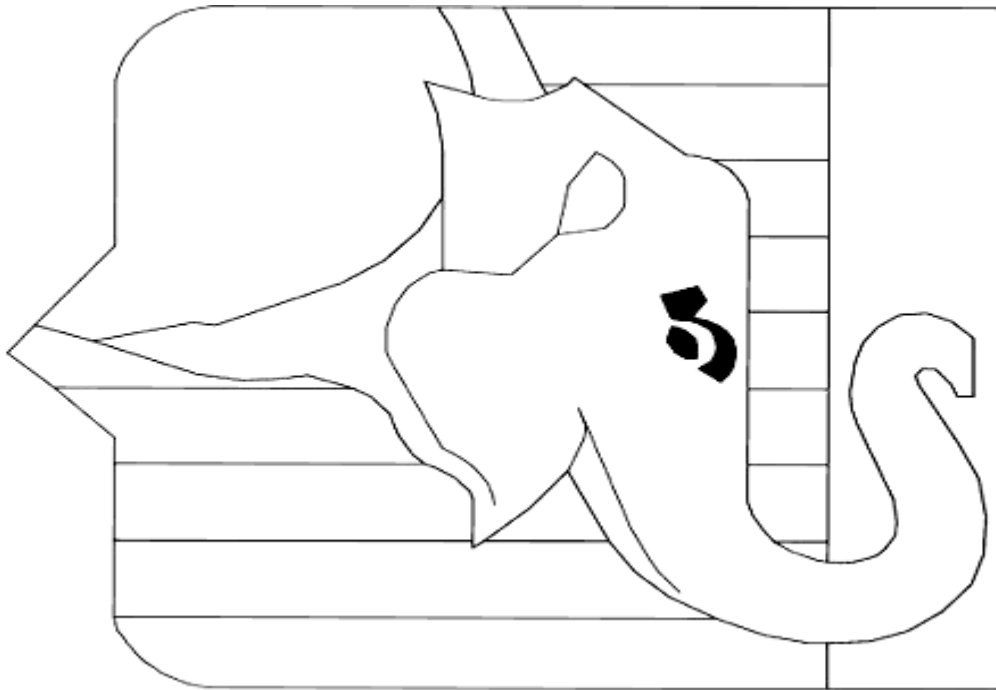
<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/>- *This CNN website has information about the different parties and candidates.*

## ***Additional Materials***

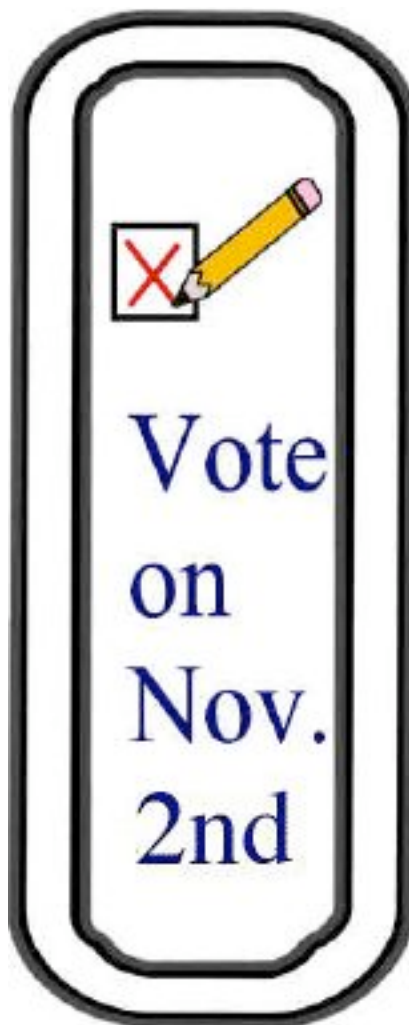
### **Voter Registration Form**

 Voter Registration
Name _____
Date _____
Birth date _____
Address _____ _____
Where were you born? _____
How long have you lived at your current address? _____
 Voter Registration
Name _____
Date _____
Birth date _____
Address _____ _____
Where were you born? _____
How long have you lived at your current address? _____

## Symbols



## Posters





## Compare the Candidates

### Compare the Candidates

Use the chart below to compare the two candidates. Write down how they are alike and how they are different. This could be their views about issues as well as their backgrounds.

Candidate 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate 2 \_\_\_\_\_

How are they alike?	How are they different?
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<http://www.abcteach.com/Elections/compare.htm>

### Candidate KWL Chart

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

What do I know about the candidate?	What do I want to know about the candidate?	What have I learned about the candidate?
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## ***Technology Requirements***

1. The students will use a multimedia program, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Hyper Studio, any of several web authoring tools, or any of several video-authoring tools to create a presentation of the candidates. This multimedia presentation will include visual and auditory modalities. It will include:
  - a. Photographs – using a digital or a standard camera with digital processed photos saved onto a CD. Picture editing software such as Photoshop or Macromedia Freehand MX, Jasc Paint shop Pro would be helpful to design and create an effective presentation
  - b. Video clips – using audio and visual recordings, using a digital camera or digital video camera saved onto a CD. Video editing software such as Adobe Premier or Windows Movie Maker 2.0 or Apple Movie Maker would be helpful to design and create an effective presentation
  - c. Audio recording and editing software such as Audacity, and digital pictures and video recording out, to design and create an effective presentation
  - d. Animation of text and graphics – using transitions and effects in PowerPoint and animated clip art from the Internet
  - e. Text – using various fonts, colors, word art
  - f. Kidspiration software
  
2. The students will use an automated ballot system to cast their votes

- a. Using the form feature of Microsoft Access database program, through a web form interface, the students will cast votes and answer the exit poll questions
  - b. The students will generate a report in Microsoft Access after the voting is completed
3. A web Server will be available for use as well as computer labs for the students.
  4. Email capabilities will be provided the student groups.
  5. Net Meeting will be available for students and teachers

### ***Extensions***

A School Newspaper, which can be accessed online, could carry the students' presentations and scrapbooks as they are developed. You could also get the newspaper sent to your classroom at least once a week. In this manner, when groups bring in items for their scrapbook they could share it with the whole class.

### ***Contributors***

This work was done by the following Lesley University graduate students enrolled the Technology in Education Division's program online course **Technology and Social Studies** taught by Dr. Jo-Anne Hart:

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