

Meet The Candidate

Grade Level: 7-12
Time: several class periods

Objectives:

- Become more informed about the political process and candidates' positions on issues and learn more about the candidates personalities.
- Be able to converse with others about the candidates and the issues.
- Understand the power and responsibility of meeting with representatives and voting.
- Understand that issues can be seen from different points of view.
- See that candidates are real people whom they can talk to. This should make it easier for students to write or call other representatives.

Curricular Connections: Civics, Media Studies, Language Arts

Materials: Each candidate will need to be asked to speak and must be told to have mostly question and answer time. Students need access to newspapers or the internet for research and registered voter sheets for the polling.

Procedure:

- 1) Before the candidates speak to the class, the students should contact parents, friends, neighbors, other teachers, administrators, and staff for information about the candidates and/or issues. Students then compile a list of questions.
- 2) Each student starts an election notebook from newspaper clippings, magazines, and campaign literature. After the election, the students turn in the notebooks with the major issues written down, the results of the election, and their opinion as to why someone would vote for the candidates.
- 3) One student should video tape each 15-minute speech and 45- minute question and answer time. This tape can be broadcast over a public access station or used for critique later. Make sure that a copy is given to each candidate.
- 4) Students could also campaign for a candidate. It could be in the form of passing out literature or stuffing envelopes to conduct surveys.
- 5) Students can volunteer to conduct a phone survey of registered voters in the county. The poll is done one night, the results tabulated and sent to the candidates, local newspapers, and the Republican and Democratic headquarters.
- 6) If you are using a federal or statewide race, students can tape political ads and show them to the rest of the class. Have them pay particular attention to the imagery in the ads, from what the candidates are wearing and who they are shown. They should look for name calling or "labeling", loaded statements, guilt by association, catchwords, baiting, passing the blame, and evading real issues or "red herrings". Ask them what they learned about the candidate from the ad. How important was the setting and script? Was it aimed at a certain group? What was the candidate shown doing? What other video footage or photographs were included? (If they don't have access to a VCR or DVD recorder have them transcribe the ads making special note of the imagery contained in them.),

- 7) On the morning of the election students can run a mock election for the school and publicize the results.
- 8) Students encourage get-out-the-vote drive for eligible students or start a campaign to get the right to vote themselves.
- 9) Have an election night party and follow the results.

Reflection:

- The students write why they thought each candidate won or lost.

Assessment:

1. Discussion to gauge Ability to identify candidates and their stances on particular issues.
2. Evaluate question lists for public relevance.
3. Election notebooks.

Source: Adapted from Ronald W. Ryckman; Educator's Reference Desk Lesson Plan #:AELP-GOV0020