

Course Title:

The Presidential Election Process

Length:

Twelve Weeks
Grades 7 & 8

DEPARTMENT:

Gifted and Talented
Sharon Wright, Coordinator
Sharon Wright, Teacher

Schools:

Pierrepoint
Union

Date:

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RUTHERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rutherford, New Jersey

GIFTED AND TALENTED DEPARTMENT

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS
MINI COURSE
GRADES 7 & 8

1. Introduction/Overview/Philosophy

The Presidential Election Process is designed to introduce middle-school students to the American election process. Students will learn how the election process works while conducting their own campaigns. Students will be in a race for the White House as they form campaign committees, each representing one of the six major political parties in the United States. Each member of the committee will take on a unique role: candidate, campaign manager, publicity manager, or speechwriter. As students learn about the Electoral College and how a candidate is elected President, they complete materials for their own campaign. Along the way, the committees will face unexpected national and international events, which they must address in their campaign through press releases. Committees write briefing papers, create advertising materials, and write a speech to be given during the final presentation on Political Rally Day. Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on higher level thinking skills, differentiation, and experiential learning.

2. Objectives

a. Students will be able

1. To identify and describe the different levels of elections in the United States - national, state, county, city, school district, and student government (6.2, 6.4, 9.2);
2. To develop an awareness of the impact American voters have through the election process (6.2, 6.4, 9.2);
3. To describe the steps and qualifications necessary to run for President (6.2, 6.4, 9.2);
4. To identify and describe the history and philosophies of the six main political parties in the United States (3.1, 3.5, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 9.2);
5. To demonstrate knowledge of a political campaign committee (6.2, 6.4);
6. To demonstrate an understanding of the history and operation of the Electoral College (6.2, 6.4);
7. To demonstrate awareness of critical issues in need of resolution in today's society (5.4, 5.10, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 8.2, 9.2);
8. To develop an understanding of the application of political theory to real issues (5.4, 5.10, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 8.2, 9.2);
9. To research and develop ideas to support a political position (3.1, 3.5, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 8.1);

10. To develop and utilize effective methods of persuasion and advertising techniques to advance a candidate (3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 8.1, 9.2);
11. To develop well-supported logical arguments to defend and oppose political platforms (3.2, 3.3, 3.4);
12. To demonstrate concise and precise written communication skills through the completion of an effective campaign speech (3.2, 9.2);
13. To accomplish a goal working with a group (3.3, 3.4, 9.2);
14. To interrelate effectively with other students (3.3, 3.4, 9.2).

b. Course Outline

- A. Introduction to the presidential election process.
- B. Introduction to the six leading political parties: the America First Party, the Constitution Party, the Democratic Party, the Green Party of the United States, the Libertarian Party, and the Republican Party.
- C. Identification of major concerns and issues in contemporary society.
- D. Research procedures.
- E. Preparation of candidate's briefing paper.
- F. Introduction to the Electoral College.
- G. Write campaign literature.
- H. Respond to world events.
- I. Develop campaign materials.
- J. Prepare presentation for political rally and election.
- K. Participation in campaign presentation at rally and mock election.

L. New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards

The following New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards are integrated into this multidisciplinary course:

Language Arts Literacy List of Standards

- 3.1 (Reading) All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.

- 3.2 (Writing) All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.3 (Speaking) All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.4 (Listening) All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
- 3.5 (Viewing and media literacy) All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, non-print, and electronic texts and resources.

Social Studies List of Standards

- 6.1 All students will utilize historical thinking, problem solving, and research skills to maximize their understanding of civics, history, geography, and economics.
- 6.2 (Civics) All students will know, understand and appreciate the values and principles of American democracy and the rights, responsibilities, and roles of a citizen in the nation and the world.
- 6.3 (World history) All students will demonstrate knowledge of world history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and the future.
- 6.4 (United States and New Jersey history) All students will demonstrate knowledge of United States and New Jersey history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and future.
- 6.5 (Economics) All students will acquire an understanding of key economic principles.
- 6.6 (Geography) All students will apply knowledge of spatial relationships and other geographic skills to understand human behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environment.

Technological Literacy List of Standards

- 8.1 (Computer and information literacy) All students will use computer applications to gather and organize information and to solve problems.
- 8.2 (Technology education) All students will develop an understanding of the nature and impact of technology, engineering, technological design, and the designed world as they relate to the individual, society, and the environment.

Career Education and Consumer, Family, and Life Skills List of Standards

9.2 (Consumer, family, and life skills) All students will demonstrate critical life skills in order to be functional members of society.

3. Proficiency Levels

This mini course is offered to students in grades 7 & 8 who have qualified for the Gifted and Talented Program.

4. Methods of Assessment

a. Student Assessment

The teacher will provide a variety of assessments which may include, but are not limited to, the following: preparation and content of written, oral, and visual campaign materials; individual and cooperative group behavior; participation in final rally presentations; and research on event card/contemporary issues.

b. Curriculum Assessment/ Teacher Assessment

The teacher/ Gifted and Talented Department coordinator will review this course periodically.

5. Grouping

Students self-select this mini course in grades 7 & 8.

6. Articulation/ Scope & Sequence/ Time Frame

Approximately twelve weeks of preparation is needed before students participate in the simulation of a political rally and presidential election. Students meet for a 90-minute period each week.

7. Resources

a. References

1. The Presidential Election Process - Teacher Guide published by Interact
2. Current news articles/editorials
3. On-line sources

b. Texts

Along with a Campaign Committee Packet, students receive copies of handouts from The Presidential Election Process - Teacher Guide on the major political parties and the Electoral College.

8. Methodologies

Methods include but are not limited to:

- Class discussion
- Individual and group research
- Brainstorming

9. **Suggested Activities**

- Research of contemporary issues
- Writing of campaign literature including, but not limited to, press releases, contemporary issues speeches, general campaign speeches, and candidate's briefing paper
- Editing/proofreading of campaign literature
- Development of candidate website
- Development and production of 30 second television or radio spot

10. **Interdisciplinary Connections**

Students consider social, civic, and environmental concerns in their race for the White House; in addition, they use skills in language arts and technology to communicate their ideas effectively.

11. **Professional Development**

As per the PIP/100 hour statement: the teacher will continue to improve expertise through participation in a variety of professional development opportunities. Specialized professional development for teachers in the Gifted and Talented Department is offered through the Bergen County Consortium of Teachers of the Gifted (BCCTG), the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), and the Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG).