

The Presidential Election Process

Six political parties form committees and
campaign for the White House



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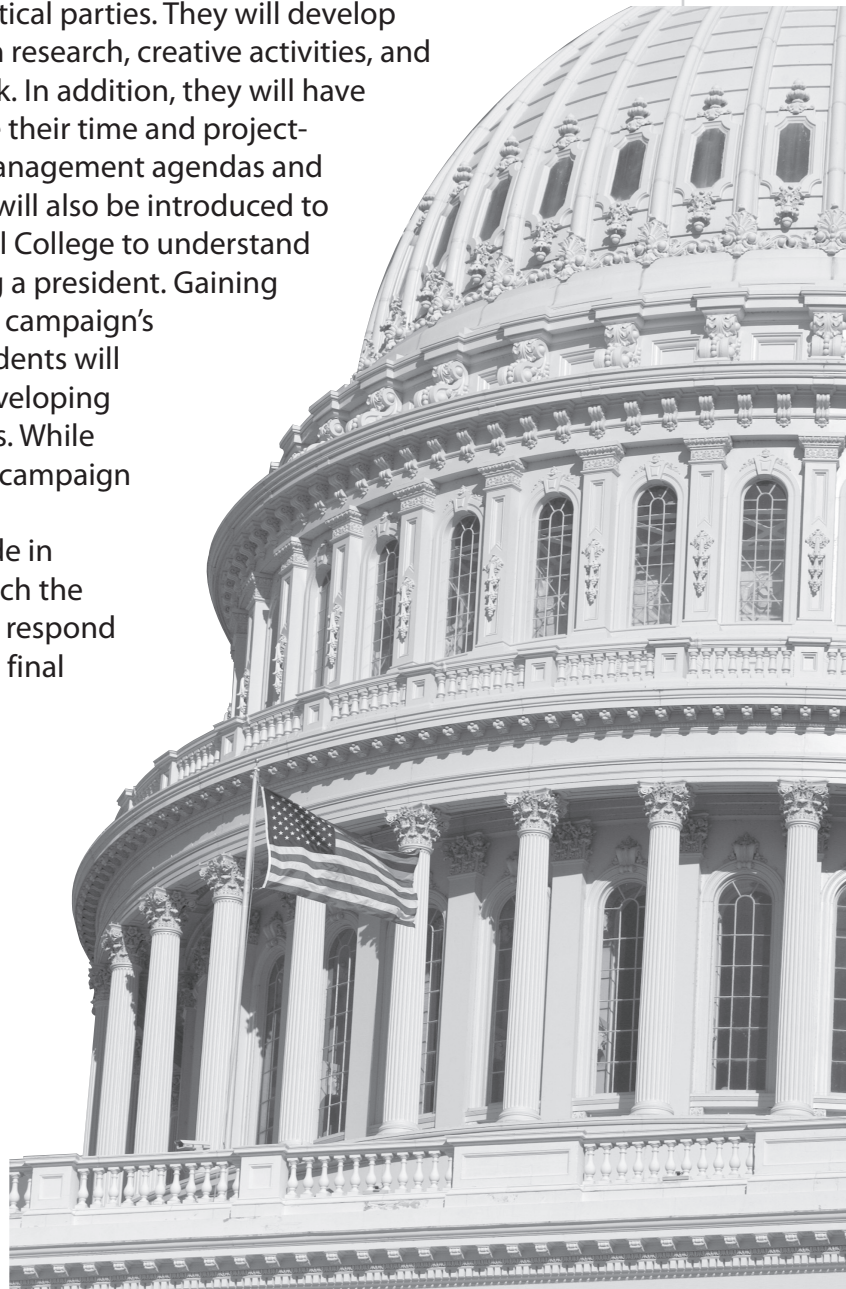
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Purpose and Overview

What is *The Presidential Election Process*?

The Presidential Election Process is a unit in which fifth to eighth-grade students conduct a presidential election campaign. In the first two days of the unit, they will review the structure of elections in the United States and the process for potential candidates to make their bid for the White House. Students will also be introduced to the histories and political philosophies of the country's 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. As the unit continues, students will form campaign committees representing one of the political parties. They will develop campaign materials through research, creative activities, and cooperative committee work. In addition, they will have the opportunity to schedule their time and project-manage their tasks using management agendas and task assignments. Students will also be introduced to the workings of the Electoral College to understand its important role in electing a president. Gaining electoral votes is crucial to a campaign's success, and in this unit, students will be completing tasks and developing materials to gain these votes. While committees are developing campaign materials, important news announcements will be made in the form of Event Cards, which the campaign committees must respond to with press releases. In the final days of the unit, students complete their campaign materials and make presentations to other members of the class on Political Rally Day.



What do students learn?

The activities within this unit are correlated to national and state education standards. To obtain specific standards information for this title, go to www.teachinteract.com or contact us at 1-800-359-0961.

In this unit, students gain and experience the following:

Knowledge

- Identify and describe the different levels of elections in the United States —national, state, county, city, school district, and student government
- Describe the steps in running for president
- Understand the history and philosophies of the six main political parties in the United States
- Understand the operation of a political campaign committee
- Understand the history and operation of the Electoral College

Skills

- Accomplish a common goal working in a group
- Understand the application of political theory to real issues
- Research and develop ideas to support a political position
- Set up and manage a project plan
- Understand effective methods of persuasion and advertising techniques

Attitudes

- Gain an appreciation for the political diversity of the United States population as reflected in the political parties
- Develop confidence in planning and carrying out a group project
- Acquire a desire to build a competent political campaign to promote its ideals

Experiential Learning

Students learn best through experience. Research shows that student retention and understanding increase as students become more involved and engaged in the learning process, regardless of whether they are high achievers, reluctant learners, or second-language learners. They will complete some tasks alone and they will need to work cooperatively to complete others. They will control their learning and will sometimes teach others.

How are students organized?

Students are divided into committees, with four to eight members per committee.

How much time is required?

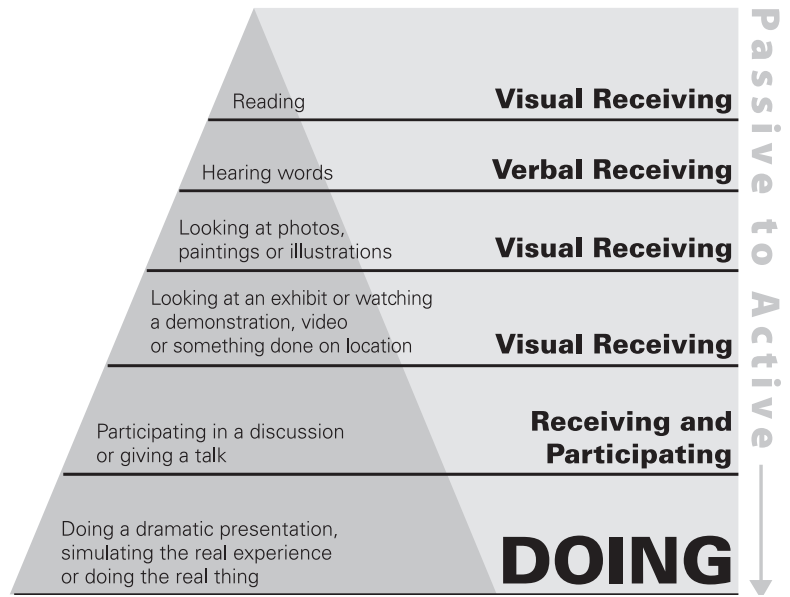
The Presidential Election Process is designed to take 10–11 class days. This schedule can be adjusted to fit your individual class needs.

How is learning assessed?

In the process of participating in this unit, students will be assessed on their understanding of key aspects of the election process. In addition to the campaign materials and final presentations, students will complete the following (answer keys are provided in the teacher materials):

- **Election Matching Activity**—In this activity, student groups match the terms for different levels of elections held in the United States with their correct descriptions.
- **Six Major Political Parties Review Sheet**—This quick, multiple-choice quiz can be used as a review test or reinforcement tool to check on students’ understanding of the political parties’ histories and philosophies.
- **Electoral College Note-Taking Handout**—This document is designed to help you assess how well students are recording notes from lecture and written documents. You can opt to have students record the information only from the lecture or allow them to have the notes before, during, or after the lecture.

Several rubrics are provided for students to use when preparing their work and for your use in scoring the work. The rubrics focus on “student work,” which includes, in addition to written work, demonstrated skills, oral exchanges, individual and cooperative group behavior, processes, strategies, and any other evidence that proves the students have learned the targeted content or skill and can apply what they know.



Adapted from Edgar Dale’s “Cone of Experience”

Components

The Presidential Election Process Package

The Presidential Election Process complete package includes:

- Teacher Guide
- Set of Six Major Political Parties Placards

Teacher Guide

The **Teacher Guide** has all of the information you need to run a successful simulation, including scripted lessons, a set of reproducible Event Cards, reproducible student handouts, and rubrics.

Six Major Political Parties Placards

The **Six Major Political Parties Placards** introduce students to the six major political parties and are perfect for creating a campaign bulletin board.



Unit Time Chart

The daily schedule is based on 50-minute periods with 3–5 students in each campaign committee. Teachers with block schedules or class periods that are less than 50 minutes will need to adjust the schedule accordingly.

Week 1				
<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the presidential election process • Election Matching Activity 	<p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to political parties • Set up campaign committees 	<p>Day 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm issues • Candidate’s Briefing Paper 	<p>Day 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral College Introduction • Hand out rubrics 	<p>Day 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing campaign literature • Introduction to Event Cards
Week 2				
<p>Day 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing campaign materials 	<p>Day 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing campaign materials 	<p>Day 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing campaign materials 	<p>Day 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for campaign presentations 	<p>Day 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign Presentations
Week 3				
<p>Day 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign Presentations 				



Lesson Plan

Day 1:

Introduction to Presidential Elections and Political Parties

Materials Needed

- **Elections in the United States**
- **Election Matching Activity**
- **Running for President**

1. Give students the **Elections in the United States** handout, or displaying it on an overhead projector. Using your copy of the definitions on the **Election Matching Activity**, take about 10 minutes to review the different types of elections that take place in the United States: national, state, county, city, general, and primary.
2. Divide the class into groups of three students and distribute the prepared envelopes for the **Election Matching Activity**. Direct the groups to match the definitions with the correct type of election. (Give students 15–20 minutes to complete the matching.)
3. After the class has completed the activity, briefly review the definitions. Then ask students if they know someone who has run for office or worked on an election campaign. Ask if any of them have run for a student office. If so, ask them to describe their experience or what they know about the election process.
4. Announce to the class the focus of this unit will be on national presidential elections. Give all students the **Running for President** handout. Review the different steps with the class. Point out that the focus of the unit will be on steps 4, 5, and 6. (10–15 minutes)
5. Homework Assignment: Ask students to find out how many political parties there are. Ask them to identify the parties, find out any information they can on them, and bring their written responses to the next class. (This is approximately 10–20 minutes of homework.)



Teaching tip

If you believe your students have a good understanding of the different levels of elections in the United States, review the headings on the handout or transparency and move to the activity in step 2.

Candidate's Briefing Paper

Name: _____

14 Possible Electoral College Votes

Political Party _____

Campaigning is like selling. Your one and only product is the candidate and his or her ideas. Voters want to know where the candidate stands on the issues, but they also want to know who he or she is as a person. They want to identify with this person and feel they can trust him or her.

As you develop your campaign, you should think about the political party issues your candidate supports. You also need to think about what kind of person your candidate is and how best to present his or her image to the public.

One of the major projects a campaign committee creates is the candidate's briefing paper. This document defines who the candidate is and presents his or her position on the major issues. It builds nearly all the campaign materials produced by the campaign committee including speeches, radio and television spots, debates, campaign flyers, and even bumper stickers and lawn signs. It is usually written in sections (listed below) with bullet points.

In this activity, all members of your committee will develop the key points for your candidate's briefing paper, which will provide a brief biography of the candidate and his or her stand on the party's central issues. Below are links to the six major political parties.

Information sources:

- America First Party: www.americafirstparty.org
- Constitution Party: www.constitutionparty.com
- Democratic Party: www.democrats.org
- Green Party: www.gp.org
- Libertarian Party: www.lp.org
- Republican Party: www.rnc.org

Also, use any party information from your party's local office or contact their main office to find more information about the party's stand on the issues.