



Lesson Objectives: Campaign Curriculum

Unit 1

Lesson 1

Students will:

- Interpret data about voting patterns by age group
- Discuss possible reasons for current turnout statistics
- Write an essay articulating why they think young people should vote

Lesson 2

Students will:

- Identify necessary qualities for effective leadership in a democracy
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a representative democracy

Lesson 3

Students will:

- Determine the races they will be following in the upcoming election
- Understand the responsibilities of the offices up for election

Unit 2

Lesson 1

Students will:

- Identify issues in their community
- Understand the interrelation among various issues in the community
- Conduct neighborhood interviews to validate classroom perceptions
- Classify issues according to issue subject

Lesson 2

Students will:

- Interpret data to identify trends in their community
- Understand the impact of community trends on community issues
- Evaluate data analysis as a means of identifying community issues

Lesson 3

Students will:

- Understand the elements of survey design
- Interpret poll results
- Evaluate polling as a means of identifying community issues
- Classify issues according to issue subject

Lesson 4

Students will:

- Compare neighborhood survey results to classroom findings
- Demonstrate democratic deliberation to determine their Youth Issues Agenda
- Provide evidence to support why their chosen issues are important to the community

Lesson 5

Students will:

- Graphically represent a campaign
- Understand how federalism impacts issues in a campaign
- Identify possible formats for capstone projects

Unit 3

Option 1

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidate advertising in a campaign
- Evaluate candidate advertising as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Research candidates' advertising to determine their position on the students' chosen issue

Option 2

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidate websites in a campaign
- Evaluate candidate websites as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Research candidates' websites to determine their positions on the students' chosen issue

Option 3

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidate debates and forums in a campaign
- Evaluate debates and forums as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Research candidates' websites to determine their positions on the students' chosen issue

Option 4

Students will:

- Develop questions for a candidate for elected office about their chosen issue
- Discuss the role of face-to-face meetings with candidates in a campaign
- Meet with a candidate for elected office to determine his/her position on the students' chosen issue
- Evaluate face-to-face meetings with candidates as a source of information about candidates' positions

Option 5

Students will:

- Discuss the role of writing to candidates in a campaign
- Evaluate writing to candidates as a source of information about their positions on the students' chosen issue
- Use candidates' responses to determine their positions on the students' chosen issue

Unit 4

Lesson 1

Students will:

- Examine citizens' information needs in a campaign
- Identify the role of the media in a campaign
- Understand the role of the First Amendment in ensuring access to information about campaigns

Lesson 2

Students will:

- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each form of media in fulfilling media's roles in a campaign
- Identify media coverage of the candidates' positions on their chosen issue
- Determine which roles the local media have played in covering their chosen issue
- Compare media coverage of the candidates to the ways in which the candidates represent their positions in their advertising, on their websites, in debates and forums, or at in-person meetings

Unit 5

Lesson 1

Students will:

- Share their candidate or election research with the community

Lesson 2

Students will:

- Conduct a mock election
- Tally results to determine the mock election winner(s)

Unit 6

Lesson 1

Students will:

- Compare actual election results to their mock election results
- Discuss possible reasons for election results
- Discuss ways to increase voter turnout, particularly among 18- to 24-year-olds

Lesson 2

Students will:

- Write a letter to the newly elected official on the students' chosen issue or ways to increase voter turnout

Lesson 3

Students will:

- Reflect on their accomplishments over the course of the semester
- Understand that civic engagement is an ongoing responsibility for all citizens



Unit 1

Student Voices, Politics and Participation

Unit Overview

Introduction

This unit provides an introduction to Student Voices, focusing on the question of why so few young people vote and why there is a need for young people to learn more about the political process, issues, and candidates.

Lesson 1: Who Votes?

In this lesson, students examine and interpret data about voting patterns by age group. They consider the question of why young people (ages 18-24) vote at lower rates than older people, and think about the implications of non-voting for a democracy.

Lesson 2: What Makes a Leader? What Makes a Citizen?

Students examine leadership qualities by identifying those they see demonstrated in their own lives and those demonstrated by mayors or others in their community with different leadership styles. Students then identify the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.

Lesson 3: Who Are We Voting For?

Students identify the election(s) they will be following over the course of the semester and examine the responsibilities of the office(s) being sought.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Interpret data about voting patterns by age group
- Discuss possible reasons for current turnout statistics
- Compose a thesis statement articulating why it is important for young people to vote

Preparation before Lesson 1

- Make one copy of [Who Votes?](#) reading for each student



Lesson Plan

1. Introduce the students to the Student Voices program. Share with students that:
 - Student Voices is a program in schools across the country designed to encourage young people to find and use their civic voices in making a positive difference in their communities.
 - The goal of Student Voices is to bring a voice “to the table” that is not often heard in elections but, through the Student Voices Program, can become significant and meaningful.
 - Throughout the course, students will become well informed about issues, share information, take civic action, and encourage fellow students to take an active role in government and politics.
 - Students involved in the project will determine what issues are important to them and their peers and examine where the candidates for local office stand on the issues.
 - In a Mock Election and through election-related projects, students can encourage other students to become informed about candidates and issues, and encourage their peers—as well as adults—to register and vote.
2. Ask students to divide one page of paper in half, either by folding the page or drawing a line. Label the two sections:
 - Part 1: Voting By Age Group
 - Part 2: “Vote or Die”: Was There More Youth Voting in 2004?
3. Hand out the reading **Who Votes?** Ask students to read **Part 1 (Voting By Age Group)** and answer the following two questions, writing down their answers under Part 1 on their notes page.
 - Which age group had the highest percentage of voters in 2004?
 - Which age group had the lowest percentage of voters in 2004?
4. Going around the classroom, ask students to share one of their responses.
5. Ask students to respond to **Part 1** of **Who Votes? (Voting By Age Group)** by noting answers to the question of why 18-to 24-year-olds vote less than other groups of voters. Students should write their answers under Part 1 on their notes page. Go around the class and have students share their notes.
6. When finished, tell the students that you are going to share with them information collected from a national survey of 18-to 24- year olds. The survey asked why young people choose not to vote. As the statements are read aloud ask students to respond to each one. Then ask students if they would like to revise their notes. Allow time for revisions on the notes page. The statements follow.



- *Many youth are not learning about the political process from their families, with a large proportion never speaking to their parents about politics.*
 - *Young people typically do not learn how to register or how to vote in school. Many do not know where to go to register to vote and feel as if they wouldn't know what to do if they walked into a voting booth.*
 - *Young people do not feel that they have enough good information about candidates, parties, and issues.*
 - *Young people see few connections between the role of government and the concerns they currently face in their own lives.*
 - *Negative political advertising and news coverage that focuses on scandal have encouraged young people to be cynical and distrustful of politics and politicians.*
 - *Youth feel as if today's politicians are not talking to them or speaking to their concerns.*
7. Ask students why they think 65- to 74-year-olds vote at such high rates. Discuss with students the implications of the fact that young people vote at lower rates than older citizens on the decisions that elected officials make about policies. Encourage students to take notes on the class discussion, and add them under Part 1 on their notes page.
 8. Have students read **Part 2** of **Who Votes? (“Vote or Die”: Was There More Youth Voting in 2004?)** Once students have completed the readings ask students to respond to the following questions, writing their answers in Part 2 of the notes page. Once finished have students go around the room and share one response:
 - Do you think these efforts made a difference in youth turnout?
 - Do the arguments they're making about the importance of voting make sense, especially for young people?
 9. Finish class by telling students that this first set of notes will be the basis of a semester-long project examining the upcoming election cycle. The notes they took will be the first in a series of activities, engaging them actively as citizens.

Assignment Suggestion

- Ask students to compose a thesis statement on why it is important for young people to vote. (They will add to this thesis statement to build on through the course of the curriculum, eventually composing an original essay on why it is important for young people to vote.)



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify necessary qualities for effective leadership in a democracy
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a representative democracy

Preparation before Lesson 2

- Make one copy of [Leadership Qualities Inventory](#) for each student.
- Make one copy of [Civic Actions Continuum](#) for each student.
- Make one copy of [What Makes a Leader?](#) questionnaire for each student.
- (Optional) Be prepared to show video of [Mayors and Government in a Time of Crisis](#).

★ Speaker Ideas

- Invite someone you or the students consider to be a leader in your school (for example, your principal) or in your community to discuss leadership qualities and their importance. Have students use the [What Makes a Leader?](#) questionnaire for the interview.
- Invite someone who is civically engaged in the school or community to speak about their activities and motivations. Have students ask questions to uncover why this person got involved and what passions drove them to choose this career path.



Lesson Plan

- Introduce the idea of leadership as important in the many aspects of one's life—community, school, sports team, etc. Explain that one goal of the Student Voices program is to encourage student leadership and that the goal of the next learning activity will be to decide what qualities of leadership students think are important.
- Hand out the **Leadership Qualities Inventory**. Introduce the activity with the entire class using an example that students are familiar with (for example, leadership on a basketball team or in a study group, or even among friends). Ask each student to work individually to complete the **Leadership Qualities Inventory**.
- Ask students to share their responses. Record the responses on the blackboard and find a consensus among the entire class of five or six leadership qualities.

(Optional) Show Student Voices Video *Mayors and Government in a Time of Crisis*.

- Brainstorm a list of leadership qualities that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Mayor Anthony Williams showed in a crisis. How were the qualities similar to or different from those they have observed in their own lives?
- Hand out **Civic Action Continuum** and have students fill out the worksheet, evaluating the importance they would attach to the different roles and responsibilities of citizenship. Have students share with each other the choices they made.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to interview a person they consider a leader in their school, church or community and ask that person what qualities they think are important to their success. Have them complete one column of the **What Makes a Leader?** questionnaire based on their interview and the second column using the qualities they observed in the video in class. You may want to have them write a compare and contrast essay that analyzes the leadership qualities and philosophies of the two leaders.
- Ask students to interview a family member about which civic actions they consider most important in the **Civic Actions Continuum** and write a paragraph comparing their own beliefs with their family members.
- Collect news articles over the next week that discuss examples of participatory citizenship. Add any new forms of participation to the list of participatory actions and think about how you would rate them on the continuum.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Determine the races they will be following in the upcoming election
- Understand the responsibilities of the offices up for election

Preparation before Lesson 3

- Make one copy of [Election Research Worksheet](#) for each student. Students will use the second part of this handout after they have determined their Youth Issues Agendas.
- (If Internet access is available): Arrange for Internet access.
- (If Internet access is not available): Gather information (pamphlets, brochures, printouts from League of Women Voters or other organizations) for students to use to identify the office that will be up for election and descriptions of the duties and powers of those offices.

★ Project Idea

- Develop an Information Guide for Voters which can be distributed in your school or community about offices that are up for election, the responsibilities of those offices, and the candidates on the ballot for the election. Be clear as to where the offices are—local, state, national—and other important information which voters might find useful.



Lesson Plan

1. Hand out copies of the **Election Research Worksheet** and have students use the Student Voices website to fill out the first column of the chart, as they learn which positions at the federal, state and local level are up for election this year.
2. If there are several positions up for election, break students into groups to research the functions of the different offices, either using the Student Voices website or material you have printed out for them, to fill in the second column of the handout on functions. At the end of class, have students share with other groups the functions of the offices they have researched.
3. If there is only one election you will study, ask all students to research that office and fill in their chart.
4. Tell students to leave the last column blank. They will refer to it in Units 3 and 4 as they research the candidates' positions on their Youth Issues Agenda.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to continue researching the positions that are up for office if they did not complete work in class, for example, finding out what the term length is for the office.
- Ask students to write a 1-paragraph essay explaining three ways that one of the offices up for election this year affects their everyday lives.
- Have students make up a sample ballot based on their research.

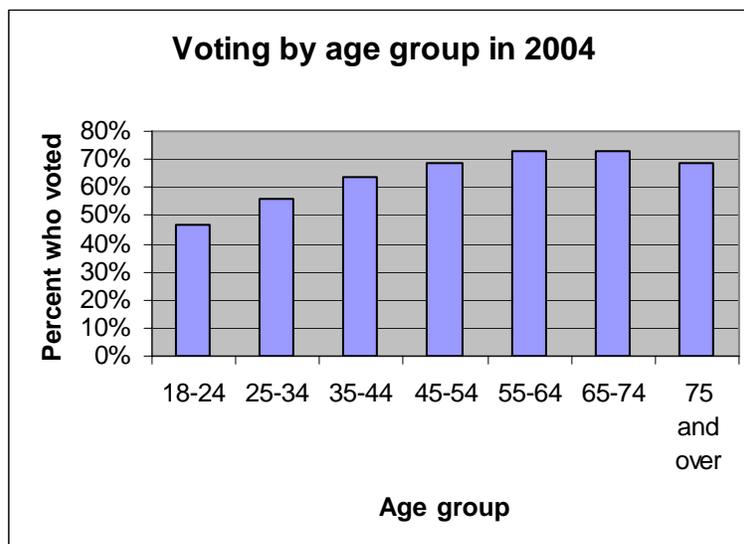


Part 1: Voting By Age Group

Before 1972, an American had to be 21 years of age or older to vote. However, in the 1970s, young people argued that the voting age should be changed from 21 to 18. If 18-year-olds were old enough to fight in Vietnam, they argued, they should be allowed to vote. In 1972, when the 26th amendment to the Constitution extended the right to vote to 18-year-olds, 50 percent of Americans aged 18-24 voted in the presidential election. That level of participation by young people has changed. Look at the chart and graph below, which show how people voted in 2004. In the 2004 presidential election, when John Kerry ran against President George W. Bush, which age group of American citizens had the highest percentage of actual voters? Which had the lowest percentage?

Table 1: Voter turnout among citizens

Age group	2004
18-24	47%
25-34	56%
35-44	64%
45-54	69%
55-64	73%
65-74	73%
75 and over	69%



Source: The Center For Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, "The Youth Vote 2004" by Mark Hugo Lopez, Emily Kirby and Jared Sagoff, July 2005.

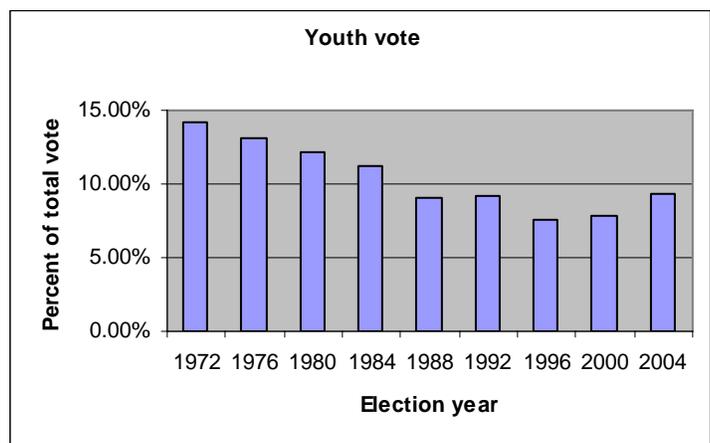


Part 2: “Vote or Die”: Was There More Youth Voting in 2004?

Although the percentage of young people who voted in the 2004 election was less than the percentage of older citizens who voted, something did change in youth voting in that election. Take a look at the following table and chart. It shows what percentage of the people who voted in each presidential election were between 18 and 24. What trend do you see?

Table 2: Youth Share of Electorate

Election Year	Percent of voters between 18 & 24
1972	14.2%
1976	13.1%
1980	12.1%
1984	11.2%
1988	9.1%
1992	9.2%
1996	7.6%
2000	7.8%
2004	9.3%



Source: The Center For Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, “The Youth Vote 2004” by Mark Hugo Lopez, Emily Kirby and Jared Sagoff, July 2005.

So what was different about 2004? There was a big effort just before the 2004 election to increase youth voting. Many celebrities urged young people to register and many organizations held events and campaigns to motivate young people to go to the polls.

Sean “Puff Daddy” Combs told young people they could not hold politicians accountable if they didn’t hold themselves accountable. In a Chicago Hip Hop Summit, rap artist Ludacris said, “It’s time for all of us to stand up and show the power of our votes so that the interests of our communities get represented.”

Michael Negron, the winner of an MTV Choose or Lose essay contest for young voters, said in a speech at July’s Democratic National Convention in Boston, “In the next few years, our leaders will make decisions on war and peace, social security and health care. If we don’t participate, if we sit on the sidelines, then we surrender any say over our own futures. But if we go to the polls in November, if we make our voices heard, then our leaders will listen and our future will truly be our own.”

Do you think these efforts were responsible for the increase in youth voting in 2004?



Civics Action Continuum

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

Part I: Considering Civic Actions

Think about each participatory civic action below. The actions are all things that citizens can do to strengthen their communities (local, state, and national) in a democratic republic. For each action listed below, put a number next to it indicating how important you think that action is. For example, if you believe “holding elective office” is very important, you will put the number 4 next to line A “running for elected office.”

NOT IMPORTANT 1	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT 2	NOT SURE 3	VERY IMPORTANT 4	MOST IMPORTANT 5
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- A. running for elected office _____
- B. registering to vote and voting _____
- C. volunteering to work for a candidate _____
- D. posting a political sign in your yard _____
- F. following the daily news _____
- H. voicing your opinion in the discussion of an issue _____
- I. writing a letter-to-the-editor about a community, national, or international issue _____
- J. holding a protest _____
- K. taking part in a food or clothing drive _____
- L. belonging to a neighborhood or service club _____
- M. contacting a local politician to share your thoughts on an issue of importance to you _____
- N. attending a public meeting _____

Part II: Reflection

1. Which item listed above do you consider to be the most important for a citizen to do in a democracy? Use examples from real life to explain your choice.

2. Which item listed above do you consider to be the least important for a citizen to do in a democracy? Use examples from real life to explain your choice.

3. Which item listed above do you think young people do most often? Why do you think this is?

4. Which item listed above do you think young people do least often? Why do you think this is?





What Makes a Leader?

Leader #1	Question	Leader #2
	What is your role in the community?	
	What is your leadership style?	
	What qualities are essential to productive leadership?	
	What are your strengths in terms of leadership ability?	
	What are your weaknesses in terms of leadership ability?	
	Who is a good leader? Why?	



Leadership Qualities Inventory

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

Leadership: In any group, there are ways in which ideas can be shared and organized so that a direction for action can be determined. What are the characteristics of a group that works well together? How did it happen? What people were involved? Where did the leadership or direction come from? What were the people like who led the group? What skills or qualities did they have? How were they chosen or how did they get to lead things?

Positive Leadership Qualities: Think of people you think make good leaders—for whatever reasons. What made them good? What made them effective? What did they offer the particular group they belonged to? For each of these people, list below the group, the leader, what you liked about that person, and what qualities made that person a good leader.

Community	Leader or Title	What I Liked	4 Qualities of Leadership
Basketball Team	Coach; Mr. Jones	He knew what we could do. He pushed himself as hard as he pushed us.	Drive, Faith, Skill, Risk-taking





Election Research Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Federal Offices:

Position or Office	Jobs of the Office	How this office can impact your YIA (Youth Issues Agenda)

State Offices:

Position or Office	Jobs of the Office	How this office can impact your YIA





Election Research Worksheet

Local Offices:

Position or Office	Jobs of the Office	How this office can impact your YIA





Unit 2

Youth Issues Agenda

Unit Overview

Introduction

In the second unit of Student Voices: Campaign, students explore issues of importance to their community and develop their Youth Issues Agenda, which will guide the rest of their research throughout the semester.

Lesson 1: Community Issues

Students are asked to think of issues most important to them as individuals and as a class. Students broaden their perspective on community issues by interviewing other members of the community.

Lesson 2: Use Data to Understand Community Issues

Students use data to determine demographic trends that may relate to community issues.

Lesson 3: Conducting a Survey

Students learn about polling and surveying through readings and experience. They develop, administer, tabulate, and interpret a community survey about issues, citizen knowledge, or voting behavior.

Lesson 4: Developing the Youth Issues Agenda

Having conducted interviews in the community or a survey to research community issues, students analyze their data to make sense of what they learned, summarize their results, and add to their list of issues. As a class, students select the 1-5 issues they consider to be the most important and determine that these will form their Youth Issues Agenda.

Lesson 5: How Will You Make Your Voices Heard?

Students use a concept map to determine how they will disseminate information about the campaign. NOTE: This work is meant to constitute a semester-long project, but teachers may opt to do additional small projects throughout the semester for assessment purposes.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Identify issues in their community
- Understand the interrelation among various issues in the community
- Conduct neighborhood interviews to validate classroom perceptions
- Classify issues according to issue subject

Preparation before Lesson 1

- Make copies of [Who Votes?](#)
- Make copies of [Community Interviews](#) sheet.



Lesson Plan

1. Ask students to write down five community strengths and five community problems.

NOTE: “Community” can be defined in a variety of ways. It might be used to mean the neighborhood in which students live, the neighborhood in which they go to school, the school itself, or some other definition entirely. Consider whether you want to provide students with a definition of community to work from, or whether you would rather they decide amongst themselves what definition of community they want to use.

2. Have students mark which community strength makes their city or town a good place to live and which community problem is the most important to address.
3. Put students in groups of 3-4 to share their ideas on what works well in their community and in what areas the community could improve.
4. Ask the class which items came up most frequently in their groups and write these on the board. Begin to categorize the specific items under broader headings. (Students are more likely later to find issues discussed in the campaign or media in terms of such broad categories.) Make sure to lead students toward ideas that can be acted on by local government. This activity also helps students to see their specific issues as part of the larger community discussion. NOTE: Be sure to save this list for Day 4 of this unit.
5. (Optional) Take students into the school community in groups of two to four with an adult. Have the students walk around the area and interview people they pass by, using the **Community Interviews** sheet. If possible, have the students use a camera or video recorder to document interviews.

Specific Issues	CATEGORY
litter; abandoned buildings	ENVIRONMENT
large class size; school repairs	EDUCATION
unemployment; more businesses	ECONOMY
drugs; violence; theft	CRIME
terrorism; safe neighborhoods	SECURITY
need for insurance; hospitals	HEALTH
others...	TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING



Assignment Suggestions

- Hand out the [Community Interviews](#) sheet and ask students to use it to interview three people in their community, asking them to identify areas in which the community could improve. Students can use family or friends for these interviews. Encourage safety in selection of people to interview.
- (Optional) Have students look at their local newspaper (either in hard copy or online from the [Student Voices website](#)) and write down two issues that they found in the newspaper that concern their community.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Interpret data to identify trends in their community
- Understand the impact of community trends on community issues
- Evaluate findings as a means of identifying community issues

Preparation before Lesson 2

- Arrange for Internet access for your students to use the U.S. Census Bureau's website <http://factfinder.census.gov>
- If Internet access is not available to students in the classroom, go to the Census Bureau's website, <http://factfinder.census.gov>, and use the directions in the Lesson Plan to print out for students:
 1. **Fact sheet with demographic profile** for your city, town, county, zip code or state and make copies for students
 2. **Population Finder sheet** showing trends from 1990-2003 for your city/town or county
- Print out copies of **Analyzing Data to Understand Issues**.



Project Idea

- Analyze data to identify trends in the community that could be issues in the campaign. Display findings graphically.



Lesson Plan

- Explain to students that another way to understand what is happening in their communities is by looking at census data. Hand out copies of **Using Data to Understand Issues** for students to use to compile information about their communities.
- If you have Internet access for the class, have students either individually or in pairs use the Student Voices website to go to the American Fact Finder website of the U.S. Census Bureau (or go directly to <http://factfinder.census.gov>). At the top center of the homepage, under “Fast Access to Information,” they will see a screen that says “Get a Fact Sheet for Your Community.” Here students will have the option for entering their city, town, county, or zip, or their entire state.
- If students do not have Internet access, distribute copies of the relevant fact sheets.
- Ask students to use the data in the Fact Sheet to answer the questions in Part 1 of **Using Data to Understand Issues**.
- Next, ask students to return to the homepage of the American Fact Finder website. On the upper left hand side of the homepage, they should click on “Population Finder,” which will take them to a page that allows them to enter the name of their city, town or county and find out how the size of the population has changed since 1990. (If no Internet access is available, distribute copies of the page that shows these population figures.)
- Ask students to use this data to complete Part 2 of **Using Data to Understand Issues**.
- Discuss with students the demographic trends they found for their community and the kinds of issues those trends might present. Ask students if the data have suggested new issues to add to their list of issues that concern them.

Assignment Suggestion

- Ask students to use **Using Data to Understand Issues** to write a 1-page essay describing 1) their community’s demographic make-up, 2) its pattern of growth or decline, and 3) what issues this data raises for the community.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

- Understand the elements of survey design
- Interpret survey results
- Evaluate surveys as a means of identifying community issues
- Classify issues according to issue subject

Preparation before Lesson 3

- Make one copy of [Survey Savvy](#) for each student.
- (Optional) Make one copy of [Interviewing and Polling](#) for each student.



Project Idea

- Conduct a survey on community attitudes, knowledge about local government, opinions about issues in the community, or voting behavior.



Lesson Plan

1. Inform students that they will be conducting their own survey to discover what other people in their community think are important issues for the candidates running for elected office.
2. Ask students to establish the goals of their survey. What exactly do they want to learn by surveying community members? The survey could focus on any of the following: issues, political knowledge of the election or candidates' positions on issues.
3. Hand out **Survey Savvy** and read with students. Discuss with students each segment of the handout.
 - ✓ What is the goal of our survey?
 - ✓ How will we select the people that we survey? What are the demographics of the community?
 - ✓ What type of sample will we seek? Representative vs. Convenience Sample? (Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each type of sample.)
 - ✓ Have students develop survey questions examining issues, political knowledge or voting behavior. Brainstorm with students to frame quality questions for the survey.
 - ✓ Discuss the importance of valid survey questions.
4. (Optional): Depending on your students' abilities and interest, you may want to use the **Interviewing and Polling** handout instead of the **Survey Savvy** handout to deepen their understanding of how to formulate a survey.

Assignment Suggestions

- Have students pre-test their survey questions on one member of the community or school. After administering the survey, students should discuss with the person who took the survey what he or she felt each question meant and if any questions were confusing. Students should take note of any questions that are misleading, difficult to understand, or biased and collectively revise/eliminate invalid questions.
- Create final surveys. Have students administer their surveys to the determined number of community members. Students should then tally and analyze responses.
- Instruct students to write a summary of their survey results and their interpretation of the results.
- Have students reconsider/revise their Youth Issues Agenda to reflect the input of their respondents.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Compare neighborhood survey results to classroom findings
- Demonstrate democratic deliberation to determine their Youth Issues Agenda
- Provide evidence that shows why their chosen issues are important to the community

Preparation before Lesson 4

- Make one copy of [Survey Savvy](#) for each student.
- Make one copy of the [Community Interviews - Small Group Summary](#) for each group.
- Arrange access to the Internet and the [Student Voices website](#).
- Have available extra copies of [What's the Issue?](#) writing template for use in the assignment.



Lesson Plan

1. Explain the **Youth Issues Agenda** to students — that it is their class’s agenda of important issues facing their community, which they will present to the elected officials or community leaders to address. The Youth Issues Agenda is the central focus of the rest of the Student Voices curriculum and the key to moving forward. Using the information they have collected by interviewing community members, from analyzing data and survey results, and from their own opinions, students should come up with 1-5 items for a Youth Issues Agenda — things that can be changed to improve their community.
2. Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Have students choose a facilitator and a recorder for each group. The facilitator should make sure that everyone is heard. The recorder is responsible for filling out the Community Interviews - Small Group Summary sheet.

NOTE: You may want to use alternate roles for individuals in the group if you have already established a system for sharing group work responsibilities in the class.

Specific Issues	CATEGORY
litter; abandoned buildings	ENVIRONMENT
large class size; school repairs	EDUCATION
unemployment; more businesses	ECONOMY
drugs; violence; theft	CRIME
terrorism; safe schools & neighborhoods	SECURITY
need for health insurance; access to hospitals	HEALTH
others...	HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, FACILITIES

3. In their groups, have students share and discuss information collected on their individual **Community Interviews** sheets. If they have conducted a survey or analyzed data about the community, they should add their findings from these sources to the discussion of issues. Recorders should write down 2 to 5 issues from each student in the group. Each group should categorize the specific issues under major headings (as in the example table this page) and select 3 issues that group members consider to be most important for a Youth Issues Agenda. (If student groups cannot decide on the top 3 issues through



discussion alone, have them vote to choose the top 3 issues.) Encourage groups to prepare reasons for why they chose those 3 issues, using examples from their interviews, survey results, or census data to support their choices.

4. Have each group present their top 3 issues to the class, providing reasons for why these were chosen over others. Write down the Youth Issues Agenda items from each group on the board.
5. As a class, discuss these issues and select 1 to 5 of the most important ones for the class Youth Issues Agenda. If students cannot decide on their top 3 issues through discussion alone, have them vote to choose the top 3 issues.

Assignment Suggestions

- If the class cannot come to a consensus about the Youth Issues Agenda, assign students to write a 1-minute speech in favor of choosing their issue over others. Students should use data or other information to support their arguments for why this issue is one of the most important facing the community.
- Ask students to write about the issue they have found to be the most important one in their community—and the issue they believe is most important for candidates to address. (Students might want to use the [What's the Issue?](#) writing template. Teachers may want to fill in the template using one issue.) They should:
 - Name the issue.
 - Describe the issue and give examples of it — what is it? what does it look like? and so on.
 - Describe why they think the issue is important, including any information collected from the interviews or survey on what other people in the community think about the issue or any census data collected.
- Encourage students to send their writing to the [Student Voices website](#) for consideration for posting as a story or to send the writing to their local newspaper as a letter-to-the-editor.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Graphically represent the campaign
- Understand how federalism impacts issues in a campaign
- Identify possible formats for capstone projects

Preparation before Lesson 5

- Make one copy of [Making Voices Heard](#) concept map sample for each student
- One blank sheet of paper for each student



Lesson Plan

1. Explain to students that they will use the rest of the Student Voices semester to research how their issue has been addressed by candidates in the upcoming election. Their final activity of the semester will be to communicate their research about the campaign and the candidates to an audience in the real world.

NOTE: You may want to have students divide into issue research teams with each team creating a project about one of the issues on their Youth Issues Agenda. Or, you may want the class to work on a single issue and project together.

2. Distribute copies of the **Making Voices Heard Sample Concept Map** to students. Explain that concept mapping is one way to brainstorm ideas and use graphics/pictures to show how these ideas are related. Students should use circles to represent each of their ideas and straight lines or arrows to show how their ideas relate to one another.
3. Hand out a blank sheet of paper to each student. Instruct students to write “ways to share information” in a circle in the center of the paper. Have students draw circles around the center for “the media,” “the school,” and “the community.”
4. Have students brainstorm ways to share information on their issue (as it relates to the campaign) with each of these groups and add the ideas to the concept map. Some ideas for disseminating information include:
 - writing letters to the editor or opinion pieces to a local or school newspaper about the candidates’ positions
 - publishing brochures or launching websites as Voters’ Guides
 - holding an in-school expo about their issue and how it is addressed by the candidates
 - translating materials about candidates and issues from English into languages spoken by students and community members and distributing it in the neighborhood
 - creating and posting posters (with permission) in the school or community about the candidates and/or election
 - performing a skit on the candidates and issues at school or at community events
 - conducting a mock debate or mock campaign in the school
 - producing a PowerPoint presentation on the results of a community survey or research on the candidates
5. After students have completed their concept maps, have them choose their favorite idea and share it with the class. As a group, consider what it will take to use each of these methods of disseminating information. Ask the students to think about whether the format is realistic, feasible, relevant to the campaign, and the best way to communicate about the candidates and the election.
6. After considering the feasibility of each option as a class, choose one to pursue. This will be the class’s project for the rest of the semester.



Community Interviews

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Introduction: What do your neighbors think are the biggest problems in their community? What do you think are the biggest problems? What do other people you know think they are? This activity, in which you conduct interviews with people in your community, will help you to get a better idea of what you and the people you know would like to see changed in your community.

Activity: Draw a map of the Community. Start by mapping the place you would consider your community on the back of this sheet. Don't look at any "real" maps, just work from your memory and what you know from living there. Label the important streets and places—stores, friends' houses or recreation areas, etc. When you interview people, stay inside the area you map. Only talk to people who work or live in this area.

Interviews: To get a variety of views, interview four different people. Select people you think are likely to have different views. Start by "interviewing" yourself so you can compare your views with those of others. Write down your ideas about what the big issues are in your neighborhood. Then, interview **three** more people, trying to get one from each of the following categories:

- ✓ Family member
- ✓ Person who lives and works in the community
- ✓ Store owner or employee
- ✓ Person who lives in the community and works somewhere else
- ✓ Friend
- ✓ Person who does a service job in the community—postal worker, etc.

Write down what you learn in the table below.

Name of person	Role (family member? store owner? etc.)	Top three community problems or issues
1. Yourself <hr/> Your Name		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.





Using Data to Understand Issues

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

▪ **PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

Name of your community (city/town, county, or zip code)

1) What is the average age of the population? _____

2) What percentage graduated from high school or higher? _____

3) What is the percentage of families below the poverty level? _____

4) What is the percentage of families in the U.S. below the poverty level? _____

5) What other observation can you make about your community based on the census data profile?

6) What problems might your community face as a result of the data described above?

▪ **PART 2: POPULATION CHANGE**

Did the population of your community grow or decline between 1990 and 2003? _____

What was the percentage change (growth or decline) from 1990 to 2003? _____

Can you think of possible reason(s) for this growth or decline?

Is the change in population good or bad for your community? Or both? Why?





Using Data to Understand Issues

Students will click here to complete Part 2.

For Part 1, have students enter their city and state in the box and drop-down menu here.

U.S. Census Bureau

American FactFinder

Main Search Feedback FAQs Glossary Site Map Help

Your source for population, housing, economic, and geographic data

Fast Access to Information

Get a **Fact Sheet** for your community...

city/ town, county, or zip

state

[or select a state using a map >](#)

For age, education, income, and race, click [People](#).
 For home values, ownership, and mortgage, click [Housing](#).
 For foreign trade, governments, and housing starts, click [Business and Government](#).

Getting Detailed Data

To learn about Data Sets, check out [About the Data](#).
 Expert user? Go directly to [Data Sets](#).

What's New

Percentage of million-dollar homes has nearly doubled since 2000. [more >](#)
 U.S. voter turnout up in 2004. [more >](#)
 New products and features in American FactFinder released April 14th, 2005. [more >](#)
 2004 Population Estimates for counties are now available from the American FactFinder [data sets page](#). [past items >](#)

Data in American FactFinder

The [Decennial Census](#) is taken every 10 years to collect information about the people and housing of the United States.

The [American Community Survey](#) - an ongoing survey that provides data about + your community every year.

The [Economic Census](#) profiles the U.S. economy every 5 years.

The [Population Estimates Program](#) publishes population numbers between censuses.

U.S. Population Clock

15:14 GMT (EST+5) May 27, 2005

 **296,216,563**
 more [population clocks >](#)

In the Spotlight

 **2002 Economic Census data available in American FactFinder - 2002**
 Economic Census data are being released on a flow basis, as [Quick Reports](#) and [Detailed Statistics Data Sets](#). Establishments, sales, employment, and payroll data are being released for counties, economic places, and more. See [Geography Quick Reports](#). [past items >](#)

Special Interest

[Kids' Corner](#) - Learn fun facts about your state and take a quiz.
[Censo 2000 Puerto Rico](#) en español.
[American Indian and Alaska Native](#) data and links
 The Bureau's [latest news releases](#) and [The Broadcast Zone](#).
 Information on [Religion](#) and [Genealogy](#)

Census Bureau Links: [Home](#) • [Search](#) • [Subjects A-Z](#) • [FAQs](#) • [Data Tools](#) • [Catalog](#) • [Census 2000](#) • [Quality](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Contact Us](#)

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
Helping You Make Informed Decisions





Using Data to Understand Issues

U.S. Census Bureau

American FactFinder

Main Search Feedback FAQs Glossary Site Map Help

Population

POPULATION FINDER

FACT SHEET

PEOPLE

HOUSING

BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT

ABOUT THE DATA

DATA SETS

MAPS AND GEOGRAPHY

REFERENCE SHELF

TOOLS

Legend

- geographic comparison tables (compare many geographies)
- thematic maps

Main > Population Finder

POPULATION FINDER

United States
United States

city/town, county, or zip
state
-- select a state -- GO
[search by address >](#)

The 2004 population estimate for the United States is **293,655,404**.

View population trends...

	2004	2000	1990
Population	293,655,404	281,421,906	248,709,873

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 Population Estimates, Census 2000, 1990 Census

View more results...

Population for all states in the United States, 2000-2004:
[alphanumeric](#) [ranked](#)

Map of Persons per Square Mile, United States by State:
[2004](#) [2000](#) [1990](#)

See more data using the [Fact Sheet](#) and other links on the left.

Census Bureau Links: [Home](#) • [Search](#) • [Subjects A-Z](#) • [FAQs](#) • [Data Tools](#) • [Catalog](#) • [Census 2000](#) • [Quality](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Contact Us](#)

U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
 Helping You Make Informed Decisions

For Part 2, Students will enter their city and state here.





"What I want to get done is what the people desire to have done, and the question for me is how to find that out exactly."

~Abraham Lincoln

A survey is a detailed study to gather and analyze information. In order to understand what is important to the people in your community it is essential that we gather and analyze information from the people themselves.

Steps to Creating a Quality Survey

1. Establish the goals of the survey - What do you want to learn?
2. Determine your sample - Who will you interview?
It is impossible due to practical limits to survey all people within the community. For this reason we often will survey a small group or a portion of the community. This smaller group is known as a **sample**. There are two primary types of samples:
 - **Representative Sample**- sample that has characteristics similar to that of the entire population.
 - **Convenience Sample**- sample that is taken of people who are easily accessible to complete a survey.
3. Create your questionnaire - What questions you will ask?
 - Keep Questionnaire Short
 - Keep Questions Simple
 - Start With Interesting Questions
 - Don't Ask Biased or Leading Questions
 - Keep Questions "Closed-Ended" (Multiple choice or "yes" or "no" answers)
 - Put Questions in Order: Start with General, Proceed to Specifics
4. Conduct interviews and enter data - Ask the questions to the determined sample. Collect completed interviews and enter responses into a spreadsheet. This is your data!
5. Analyze the data - Produce reports on the data you collected using a spreadsheet. You may want to analyze:
 - How frequently the same answer was chosen for each question
 - Whether people who answered the same on one question gave the same answers on other questions
 - If people who answered the same had similar backgrounds or demographics



Interviewing and Polling

Most of the polls you see about government focus on the amount of support that candidates or elected officials have from citizens. But polls and surveys can do much more to inform citizens about important issues, how well they understand the issues, and how well they know candidates' and elected officials' positions on those issues.

You can conduct your own poll to answer some of these questions. Your community may have problems that are unique or that do not get much attention in the news. This is your chance to find out what those problems might be and how much of a concern they are to people in your community.

The first step in finding out what problems people experience is to ask people **“open-ended”** questions about the problems they think are most important. Open-ended questions give **respondents**, or the people answering your questions, the chance to choose their own answers. For example, you might ask: "What do you personally think are the most important problems facing our community?" Each respondent would be allowed to name up to three things that they were concerned about. Open-ended questions are very different from **“forced-choice”** questions, which give respondents a few possible options for their answer. Multiple-choice questions are a form of forced-choice questions, and so are true-false questions.

Surveys often use professional telephone interviewers who use sophisticated computer-assisted methods for selecting people to call and for doing the interview. One reason for using computer-assisted methods is that it allows you to call people at random. This gives you a better chance of reaching every kind of resident (who has a phone) and produces what is called a **“representative sample.”**

For your class survey, you will not have the resources available to conduct a representative sample survey. In your case, you will probably do your surveys using what is known as a **“convenience sample.”** This sample probably does not represent your community as well as a representative sample, but it is the best you can do. Typical convenience samples are the people you might find in a shopping mall or on a busy street. Convenience samples often do a good enough job of representing people's opinions, and they are used very often in marketing research.

Once you know the most important problems confronting your community, you will want to know what people think should be done to solve the problems. Because solutions to problems are complex, you probably will need to ask what people think causes those problems. You may want to give your interviewees a choice between 3-5 approaches to solve a problem.

Or, you may want to do a poll that measures citizens' political knowledge. It is the responsibility of the news media to inform citizens about the candidates and elected officials. A good example of a poll assessing citizen knowledge would ask people the names of their elected officials or the major candidates running in the election. It would also ask them if they knew their stands on the issues. As you research candidates' or elected officials' stands on issues, you will be able to see how accurate your respondents' views are.

In doing polls, it is important to recognize that the wording of the questions has a strong influence on the answers that you get back. This is especially true for complex election issues.

Tips for Asking Good Survey Questions

- Keep wording simple and clear.
- Include basic demographic questions, such as the age and ethnic background of the respondent.
- Keep personal views and biases out of questions.
- Use neutral and balanced wording.
- Ask general opinion questions before questions about specific news events.
- Use simple and clear wording in open-ended questions. For example, a simple and clear open-ended question is: "What do you think is the most important problem facing the community?"



Community Interviews — Small Group Summary

Group Members: _____

DATE: _____

Introduction. Your small group needs to decide on 3 issues you all agree are the most important ones discovered in your community. Use this sheet to help organize your discussion. Once you have selected a facilitator and recorder (Step 1), record 3-5 issues from each group member (Step 2) and then come to consensus among yourselves on the 3 most important (Step 3).

(NOTE: Everyone must have completed individual Community Interview sheets to do this activity.)

Step 1. Select a **facilitator** and a **recorder** for your small group – a facilitator should make sure everyone is heard and a recorder is responsible for writing things down.

Step 2. Issue Summary for Small Groups

1. Go around the group and ask each person to state 5 community problems from the interview sheets. The recorder writes these down, then reads back the lists when they are complete.
2. As a group, you should agree on a list of **3 issues** that you select as the most important things to change in your communities. Have the recorder circle the 3 issues on the chart below and write them into the second table of “Top Items for Youth Issues Agenda.” These items form an agenda—a list of items for action.

	Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4	Issue 5
Member 1					
Member 2					
Member 3					
Member 4					
Member 5					

Step 3: Group Summary (What are your group’s top 3 choices of issues for the class’s Youth Issues Agenda)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

NAME: _____

DATE: _____





Making Voices Heard Sample Concept Map

Directions: Use this template to write about the issue you think is the most important one in your community, state, or country as a whole.

The issue that I believe is most important to my community is _____

If you walk around my community you will see [give examples of the problem and what it looks like, or evidence it exists]_____

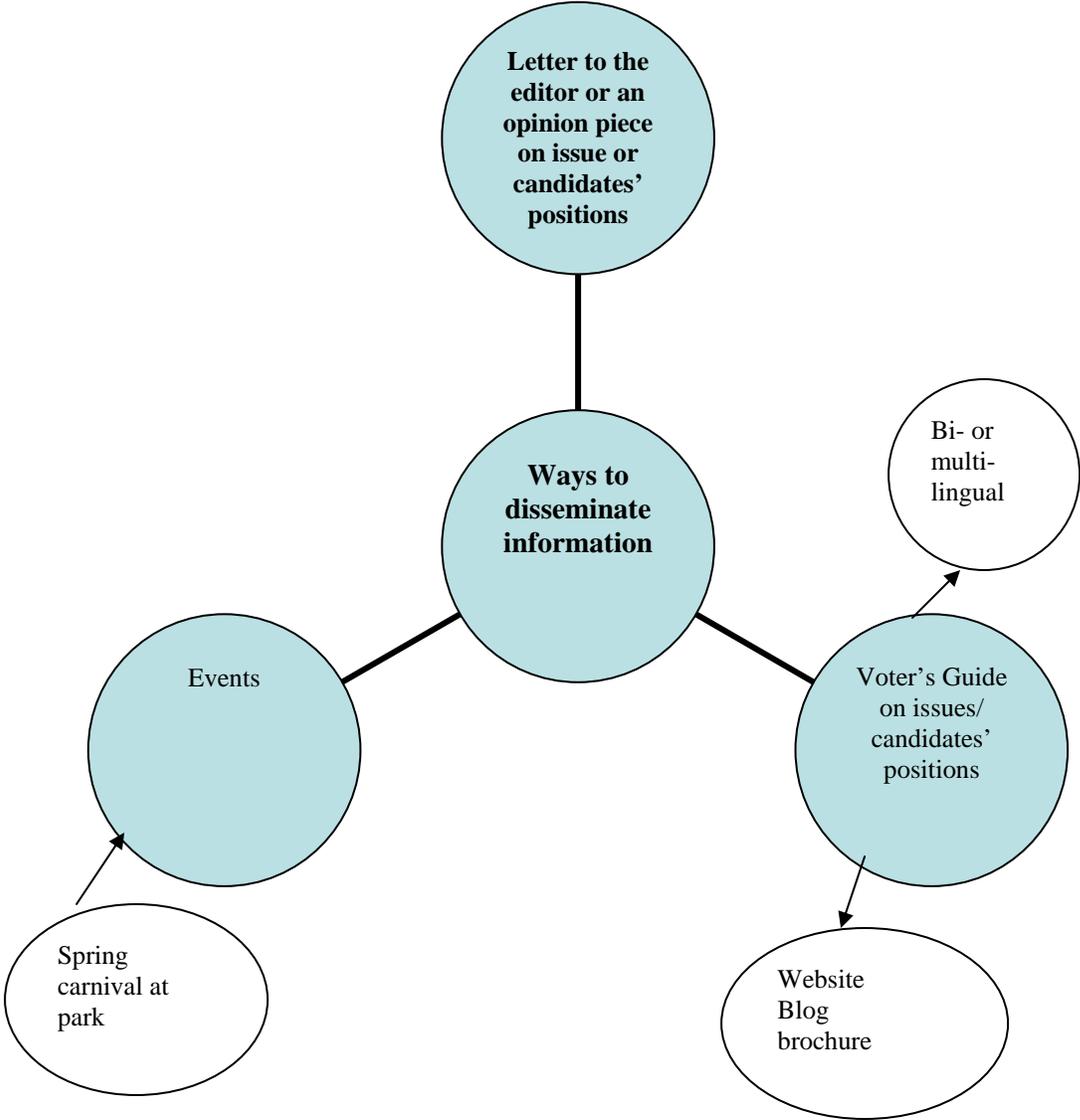
People who work or live in the community also think this is a problem. They say_____

The reason that I think _____ is the most important problem in the community is _____





Making Voices Heard Sample Concept Map





Unit 3

Candidates in Their Own Words

Unit Overview

Introduction

In this unit, students begin an intensive study of the issues and the candidates in the election the class will be studying. Here students learn how candidates try to communicate messages directly to citizens about their positions on issues and qualifications for elected office. The following lessons are options. Choose those options that are most applicable to the races in your community.

Option 1: Campaign Websites

In this lesson, students learn about the role of the Internet in gathering information about candidates and they analyze the candidates' websites to learn about positions on issues.

Option 2: Political Advertising

In this lesson, students research candidates' positions on issues using candidates' political advertising and analyze the messages in those ads.

Option 3: Candidate Debates and Forums

Students learn about the role of political debates in providing candidates with a forum to express their positions in their own words.

Option 4: Inviting Candidates to Class

In local elections, candidates may be able to come to class to answer students' questions about where they stand on issues of importance to students. In this 2-day lesson, students prepare for a meeting with a candidate and then meet with him/her to ask about his/her position on the students' issues.

Option 5: Writing to the Candidates

For elections in which candidates may not have websites or advertise or where there is not extensive media coverage of candidates' positions on issues (or in cases where there is little information on an issue that concerns the class), students can write directly to the candidate or campaign office to request information on where candidates stand on issues.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidate websites in a campaign
- Evaluate candidate websites as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Research candidates' websites to determine their positions on the students' Youth Issues Agendas

Preparation before Option 1

- Remind students to bring their [Election Research Worksheet](#) (from Unit 1) to the next class.
- Make one copy of [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#) for each student.
- Make one copy of [Using the 'Net](#) handout for each student.
- (If Internet access is available): Arrange for access to the [Student Voices Website](#) for use in student research.
- (If Internet access is not available): Print out copies of candidates' issue statements or other relevant materials from their websites for students to use in their research.
- (Optional for assignment) Make copies of [Grading the Candidates' Websites](#) handout OR the [Campaign Website Analytical Form](#) for a more in-depth analysis.

★ Project Idea

- Have students design their own website, for a real or for fictional candidates, with an eye to attracting young voters.



Lesson Plan

1. Explain to students that one of the ways to prepare to vote on Election Day is to find out where the candidates in the election stand on the issues that are most important to them. Ask students to brainstorm and come up with a list of ways they can find out where the candidates stand on their issues. Call on students to discuss what they came up with and write them on the board.
2. Point out to the students that some of the ways they will learn about candidates and issues is through listening to (or reading) messages presented directly from the candidates in *their own words* (on their websites, in public appearances and debates, in a classroom, in letters, or in their ads).
3. Another way to learn about the candidates is to find out what others have said about their positions and qualifications, most notably through *the role of the news media and non-partisan and interest groups*, which will be discussed in the next lesson.
4. Explain that today your students will begin to see what the candidates have said in their own words on their campaign websites.

NOTE: You may want to discuss with the class whether they would like to research their top issue or several of their issues, or make this decision yourself.

5. Divide the students into Issue Research Teams with three to five students per team.
6. If the class is going to research several issues, each team should be assigned one of the issues. If the class is going to focus on one issue, each team can focus in depth on a single candidate's approach to the issue.
7. Hand out **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**. As a class, fill in the blocks on the chart as described below.
 - ✓ If the class is examining several issues from their agenda, have students fill in the cells of the left-hand column with those issues.
 - ✓ If the whole class is researching a single issue, have them think about the four or five most important aspects of the issue and list them in the cells of the left-hand column.
 - ✓ Have students fill in the top row of the **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** with the names of candidates in the election you have chosen to study. (They may need to use additional sheets if there are more than three candidates.) Choose one race to look at OR look at several races with the class—use one sheet for each.



8. Have students use the candidates' websites to research the candidates' positions on their issue.
 - If Internet access is available: Have students look for the candidates' positions on issues by going to the [Student Voices Website](#) and linking to candidates' websites.
 - If Internet access is not available: Distribute copies of candidates' websites you made before class. Instruct students to use the materials to complete their charts.
9. Based on their research, have students consider how the office that the candidates are seeking can affect their issue. They should record their thoughts in the third column of their [Election Research Worksheet](#).
10. Ask students to read [Using the 'Net](#) and in their Issue Research Teams write down one reason why candidates would use the Internet to reach potential voters. Share as a class.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to analyze two candidates' websites, using the [Grading the Candidates' Websites](#) worksheet. Share the grades and reviews in the next class.
- Have students analyze one or more candidates' websites using [Website Analysis](#) form and share analysis in the next class.
- Have students use the chart completed during the class activity as a guide to write an op-ed on which candidate they believe would be the best choice based on the information gathered thus far. Students can revise this initial essay as they proceed through the succeeding lessons and gather more information on each candidate. Students should revisit these revisions at the conclusion of the unit to write a final draft.
Prompt: *If the election were held today, I would cast my vote for...*



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidate advertising in a campaign
- Evaluate candidate advertising as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Research candidates' advertising to determine their positions on the students' Youth Issues Agendas

Preparation before Option 2

- Remind students to bring their **Election Research Worksheet** (from Unit 1) to the next class.
- Have available **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**.
- (If you want to use “The Living Room Candidate” website to show political ads): Arrange for Internet access.
- Make copies of **Campaign Advertising—Selling the Candidates** reading.
- (Optional for in-class activity or assignment) Make copies of **Campaign Advertising Worksheet** and, if using in-class activity, arrange to play a video of a TV political advertisement or bring in a newspaper ad or direct mail ad.
- (Optional) Make copies of **Are “Negative” Campaign Ads Bad?**

★ Project Ideas

- Have students conduct an Adwatch of one or more of the candidates' campaign ads, using **How to Do An Adwatch** reading and the **Adwatch Activity Sheet**. **NOTE:** Students may want to look at Factcheck.org's website to see how candidates' ads can be examined for their accuracy at <http://www.factcheck.org>.
- The class can work on a series of candidate campaign ads that they think will be both accurate and effective. The ads can focus on leadership qualities of a candidate or on positions on issues. Students should think about how they will get their message across, and whether the ad should be TV, radio, print, or by telephone. If students want to target young people with their ad, what techniques would they use?



Lesson Plan

1. Have students read **Campaign Advertising—Selling the Candidates** and, working with a partner, come up with two reasons why candidates use political advertising to communicate with voters—and why ads may be considered more effective than making public appearances. Share with class.
2. Ask students why some candidates are able to advertise more on television than others, touching on the cost of making the ad itself and buying time on television. Discuss with students the other avenues for “advertising” candidates have besides television, such as radio, direct mail, yard signs, or bumper stickers. Ask students to point to one advantage and one disadvantage of each form, compared to television.
3. If you are analyzing an ad in class: as a warm-up activity ask students to think of campaign commercials they have seen. What thoughts do they have on them? How are they different from other TV commercials?
4. Hand out copies of **Campaign Advertising Worksheet** and ask students to look over the questions they will be expected to answer after they watch the ad.
5. Show a TV ad by one of the local candidates OR use a presidential campaign ad from the Living Room Candidates website (<http://www.ammi.org/livingroomcandidate>). You may need to show the ad more than once. Have the students fill out their worksheets and then discuss the central message of the ad, as well as the visuals and music used.
6. If the ad contains negative information about a candidate’s opponent, ask students what they think of that strategy. Do such negative ads help inform voters? (Optional: Have students read **Are “Negative” Campaign Ads Bad?**)
7. If you are able to examine local candidates’ ads (TV or print) in class, ask students what information they can take from the ad(s) to fill in cells of their **Candidates’ Issue Position Chart**.
8. If you are able to examine local candidates’ ads (TV or print) in class, ask students what information they learned from the ad(s) to fill in the 3rd column of their **Election Research Worksheet**.
9. For more information on claims made in campaign ads, visit the Annenberg Public Policy Center’s adwatch website Factcheck.org at <http://www.factcheck.org>.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to write a 1-page essay evaluating the usefulness of candidates’ political advertising as a source of information about their positions.



- Have students keep a campaign logbook, writing down when they see a campaign ad, the location of the ad, and its central message. Ask them to use the information from their logbook to continue filling out their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**.
- Have students take one candidate's position on an issue from their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** and make an ad from it—in the form of one billboard (poster size), or the script of one 30-second radio spot or one 60-second TV spot.
- Have students write a 1-page essay, choosing one of the following two topics:
 - “The Ad Candidate X Should Make to Get Elected”
 - “Why I Think Candidate Y's Ad Hits the Mark...or is Way Off Base”
- Have students use the chart completed during the class activity as a guide to write an op-ed on which candidate they believe would be the best choice based on the information gathered thus far OR have students revise the initial essay they began in Option 1. If students are revising, remind them to keep track of their revisions so they can write a final draft at the conclusion of the unit.

Prompt: *If the election were held today, I would cast my vote for...*



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the role of candidates' debates and forums in a campaign
- Evaluate debates and forums as a source of information about candidates' positions
- Observe a debate or forum to determine the candidates' positions on the students' Youth Issues Agendas

Preparation before Option 3

- Remind students to bring their [Election Research Worksheet](#) (from Unit 1) to the next class.
- Have available [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#).
- Have available a videotape of a candidates' forum or debate to show in class OR assign students to watch a forum or debate before this class.
- Make copies of [What Can We Learn from Candidates' Words?](#)

★ Project Ideas

- Hold a mock debate in class or in the school with students acting as candidates, moderators, and questioners. Other students in the audience may pose questions.
- Have students deliver their speeches on behalf of candidates at a school forum before the election.
- Host a Candidates' Forum for your school and/or community, in local elections.
- Host a Candidates' Debate viewing at your school, inviting school and community members to attend and engage in a discussion of the debate after its conclusion.



Lesson Plan

1. Have students read **What Can We Learn from Candidates' Words?** and write down whether they agree or disagree with the statements about why candidate forums and debates help citizens decide who to vote for. Ask them to choose what they think is the most important reason why citizens should pay attention to debates and forums.
2. Provide time for students to watch a debate or part of a debate or forum. As the students watch the video have them take notes on the candidates' main points and the way they support those points.
3. After watching the debate, ask students if the candidates addressed the issues on the class's Youth Issues Agendas. What positions did they take? Ask students to use this information to continue filling in their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**. Students should also fill in the third column of their **Election Research Worksheet** using information they learned from the debate.
4. Ask the students to write down the strongest argument each candidate made for why he or she should be elected. Ask students to then think of whether any candidate made a strong argument for why another candidate should NOT be elected. Which statements did the students agree with?
5. After watching a debate, return to the question of what function debates and forums play for citizens and ask students to summarize what they have found.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to write a 1-page essay evaluating candidate ads as a source of information about candidates' positions on the issues.
- Have students write a paragraph about what the effect would be if candidates decided not to participate in campaign debates or forums. If a candidate won't debate, what can media or citizens do to increase the likelihood that he/she will change his/her mind? How would their decision affect voters?
- Have students use their Candidate Position Chart to choose one candidate and one issue and write a speech for a public appearance that the candidate would make, detailing the candidate's position on the issue in question. Students should decide on the setting/location of the public appearance and the audience for the speech and tailor it accordingly.
- Have students use the chart completed during the class activity as a guide to write an op-ed on which candidate they believe would be the best choice based on the information gathered thus far OR have students revise the initial essay they began in Options 1 and 2. If students are revising, remind them to keep track of their revisions so they can write a final draft at the conclusion of the unit.

Prompt: *If the election were held today, I would cast my vote for...*



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Develop questions for a candidate for elected office, based on the class's Youth Issues Agenda
- Discuss the role of face-to-face meetings with candidates in a campaign

Preparation before Option 4, Day 1

- Remind students to bring their [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#) and [Election Research Worksheet](#) (from Unit 1) to the next class.
- Invite one or more of the candidates in an upcoming election to class. Refer to the [Inviting Candidates to Class](#) template for suggested format.



Lesson Plan

1. As a group, discuss why citizens might want to meet with a candidate for office face-to-face. How does this method of gathering information about candidates' positions compare with the other forms (websites, ads, debates or forums, etc)? Write a list of students' expectations about the visit on the board.
2. Ask students to refer to their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** to determine whether they still need to find information about where the candidates stand. Have students brainstorm a list of questions for the candidate related to their Youth Issues Agendas.
3. Ask students to think of other questions they might want to ask the candidate. For example:
 - ✓ How did the candidate become interested in running for office?
 - ✓ What in the candidate's background has prepared him or her for this office?
 - ✓ What leadership qualities does he or she have to qualify for office?
4. Discuss with students whether they have any hypothetical questions for candidates. For example:
 - ✓ What is the first thing you would do if there was a major accident or natural disaster?
5. Hand out index cards and ask students to write down the questions they would most like to ask on the cards, one question to a card, with their names on each card. Collect the cards. You may want to select which questions the students ask and in what order, and hand out the cards at the beginning of the class when the candidate visits. OR you may want to ask the students to decide the order of the questions, giving them the following guidelines:
 - ✓ Ask routinely factual questions first
 - ✓ Move on to questions about the person's background and experience
 - ✓ Proceed to questions about positions on issues
 - ✓ Ask thought-provoking questions when the speaker is warmed up
6. Have one or two students prepare an introduction to the speaker, by referring to his or her website. Identify the student to ask the first question and on the day of the visit, hand back index cards to students with the questions they will ask.
7. Ask students to introduce themselves before asking their questions.
8. Follow up with a thank-you note from the class.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Meet with a candidate for elected office to determine his or her position on issues of concern to youth.
- Evaluate face-to-face meetings with candidates as a source of information about candidates' positions.

Preparation before Option 4, Day 2

- Remind students to bring their [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#) and [Election Research Worksheet](#) (from Unit 1) to the next class.
- Confirm candidate visit.
- Invite local media to cover candidate visit. (Refer to the Press Kit section of the curriculum for more information on how to invite media.)



Lesson Plan

1. Distribute students' 3x5 cards and identify one or two students to ask the first questions.
2. Remind students to take notes on the candidate's answers to their questions so that they can fill out their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** and their **Election Research Worksheet** after class.
3. Ask the students who prepared an introduction for the speaker in the last class to introduce the speaker.
4. Ask the candidate to give a few opening remarks about his/her background, reason for seeking office, or some other biographical information.
5. Open the floor to questions. Remind students to introduce themselves before asking their questions.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to use the candidate's visit to continue to fill in their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** and **Election Research Worksheet**.
- Ask students to write a 1-page essay evaluating face-to-face meetings as a way to gather information about a candidate. Did their experience match the expectations they brainstormed in Day 1 of this lesson?
- Have students write a paragraph summarizing what the candidate said about one of the issues on the class's Youth Issues Agenda.

Overview



Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the usefulness of contacting a candidate or campaign office directly to obtain information
- Compose letters to candidates summarizing the class's objectives and requesting information about specific issues.
- Use the candidates' responses to determine their positions on issues.
- Evaluate writing to candidates as a source of information about their positions on the students' issues.

Preparation before Option 5

- Remind students to bring their [Election Research Worksheet](#) to the next class.
- Remind students to bring their [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#) to class.
- Make one copy of the [Inviting Candidates to Class](#) template for each student.



Project Ideas

- **Voters' Guide:** Have students write to each of the candidates to find their positions on the students' Youth Issues Agenda and compile a Voters' Guide, based on the results, that can be distributed within the school or in the community.
- **Local Political Race Website:** Have students create a website on local office elections in cases where elections get virtually no coverage and where the candidates themselves do not have websites. Students would contact each candidate for the necessary information to complete the website. On the final website, for each political race, students would display:
 - ✓ Profiles of all candidates on the ballot
 - ✓ Pictures of each candidate
 - ✓ Stances on important issues

Once students create the website, they could try to get some public attention for it by creating a Public Service Announcement on local radio or TV or on local public access channels or by letting the local newspaper know about it.

Lesson Plan



1. Explain to students that in elections where candidates do not have websites or advertising and where there are no formal debates or forums, OR where the candidates have not made any statements about issues of concern to young people, students can go directly to candidate and campaign offices to request information.
2. Ask students to examine their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** and **Election Research Worksheet** to see if there are places where they still do not have information in a candidate's own words.
3. Hand out copies of the **Inviting Candidates to Class** template and ask students to use it to begin to draft letters to the candidates asking them or their campaign staff to supply information on where they stand on the issues. If there are several candidates, you may want to break students into teams to draft letters to each candidate.
4. Have students locate addresses for the letters, either by going to the candidates' websites or by contacting your county election board.

Assignment Suggestions

- Have students complete their letters to the candidates.
- Have students write a 1-page essay comparing the pros and cons of writing to a candidate with other ways of gathering information about a candidate's positions on the issues.



Candidates' Issue Position Chart

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Activity: In the chart below, track the issues being addressed by the candidates – in debates, on their Websites, in classroom visits, and in news coverage. Be sure to list where you found the information. (Issue category headings with some specific examples are under the category. See the example under issue #1). List issues on the left side of the chart, down the first column. When watching a debate or other candidate interaction, try to fill in as many cells as possible, listing what the candidate said he or she would do about the issue or problem. List the names of the candidates first:

Candidate 1: _____ Candidate 2: _____ Candidate 3: _____

Issue Category and Examples	Positions of Candidate 1	Positions of Candidate 2	Positions of Candidate 3
Issue 1: ECONOMY more jobs; attract businesses; lower taxes			
2.			
3.			
4.			

NOTE TO STUDENTS: As you watch the candidates campaign in the coming weeks be sure to update this form, noting any changes in the candidates' positions, adding any issues (and candidate positions) you think are important, and keeping track of any questions you would like to ask the candidates. Consider, too, how you would answer the following question: Which answer was, in your opinion, the best you heard from any candidate to address one of the issues, and why do you think that answer was best?





Grading the Candidates' Websites

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Here's your chance to grade the candidates on the websites that have been created to tell voters about their campaigns. Is their biography worth an A or a C? Did they give you the information you needed to decide whether they'd be good for the city? You be the judge.

Candidate's Name: _____ Web address: _____

How well does the website do in each of these areas? GRADE

- Telling you about personal background (such as the candidate's education, family, or past jobs) _____
- Telling you about the candidate's stands on issues _____
- Telling you about what he or she did in past positions _____
- Providing documentation to support factual claims _____

Comments:

How good a job does the website do in each of these areas? GRADE

- Providing campaign finance information _____
- Offering opportunities for direct interaction on the site _____
- Promoting voter registration and information for young people _____

Comments:

Did the website tell you anything useful about opponents?

- Comparisons with opponent(s) positions on the issues _____
- Documentation to disprove opponent(s) claims _____

Comments:

Did the site make it easy or hard to find the information you wanted about candidates?

Overall, what grade would you give the site? _____

Overall comments: Was there any information that you wanted that was not available on the site? What did you like best and least about the site?





Imagine that you are a candidate running for office. You think you have some really good ideas and good plans for how to make the government run better. But how are you going to convince people to vote for you? How will you tell them about your good qualities and all the things you would do?

If you could, you might want to sit down with all the voters and convince them of why you are the best person for the job. But with thousands and thousands of people in your city or town, that's just not possible. You could give a speech, visit senior citizen homes or malls, advertise on TV, radio or in the newspaper, put up billboards and signs, send letters or call people's homes. But as more and more people have started using the Internet, more candidates are using websites to get information to voters.

When did candidates for public office first start to use the Internet to communicate with voters?

In 1996, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole became the first presidential candidate to mention a website at a presidential debate (with Bill Clinton) announcing the address for his "World Wide Web home page" and encouraging voters to visit the site. Actually, the Clinton-Gore campaign in 1992 was the first major candidate use of a website, including the full texts of speeches, advertisements, and position papers, as well as biographies of the candidates, but since few people were connected to the Internet in 1992, the site received little public notice. By 2004, when 61 percent of American voters reported that they were regular users of the Internet and 29 percent said they got campaign information from the Internet*, many political candidates were mounting websites.

What can a website do for a campaign?

Candidates can use websites to: tell you about themselves, compare themselves to an opponent, recruit volunteers, and raise money for their campaigns.

Why would a candidate use the 'Net instead of Advertising?

- ✓ **Cost:** The cost of posting a home page is relatively small, compared to buying TV or radio time, or sending out direct mail brochures. For some candidates, the cost is nothing, as volunteers offer to set up their sites.
- ✓ **Say as Much as You Want:** Advertising time costs money—lots of money. Campaigns can use websites to provide a lot of information to voters on a range of issues.
- ✓ **Put New Information Up All the Time:** Candidates can provide constantly updated information on their websites, such as their calendar of appearances or news of an endorsement.

In the future, will candidates only use the 'Net to reach voters?

Not likely. The problem with using a website to reach voters is that it is hard to get people to go to the website and read the information voluntarily. Candidates have been very cautious about coming "uninvited" to voters over the Internet, in the form of "Spam."



Which people are most likely to use the Internet for campaign information?

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center for People and Press showed that almost 30 percent of people who voted in the 2000 presidential election got news about the election from the Internet. The survey showed that younger people are the most likely to consume election news online. People age 18-29 are more than twice as likely as those over the age of 50 to get news about the election online. In addition, younger voters found online information to be particularly influential. Half of online news consumers under age 30 said their voting decisions were affected by information they found online.

*Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center for the People & the Press



Website Analysis Form

Candidate's Name: _____

Website Address: _____

<u>Aesthetic Appeal</u>	<u>Access to Information</u>	<u>Candidate's Character</u>	<u>Campaign Issues</u>
Color Scheme and Overall Appeal	File Size and Download time	Educational Background and Relative Experience	Are there statements about or links to Issues
Layout	Menus (ease)	Employment History	Issues – are they clearly defined
Photographs	ALT text (in case graphics or pictures don't load)	Community Involvement	Issues – is there a stated plan of action
Graphics	Language	Personal Data	Is plan of action supported with data



Website Analysis Form

<u>Solicitation of Support</u>	<u>Endorsement</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Overall Appeal</u>
Volunteer Opportunities	Approval of website by candidate	Address, Phone and Contact Information	Target Audience
Financial Support	Celebrity or Other Endorsement	Email Link to Candidate	Multimedia Use
Voter Registration and Election Day Support	Organizational Support or Endorsement	Blog or other discussion board	Ease of Navigation

What was your overall impression of this candidate's website? Describe below.



As you watch television in the weeks before an election, you will see that alongside ads for cars, painkillers and fast food there are also ads for political candidates. Some of these ads tell you why you should vote for a candidate, while others tell you why you shouldn't vote for someone else. You may like some of the ads, while others may turn you off.

But why do political candidates need to spend money on television advertising? What goes into an ad? How do candidates choose what to say, and what to show – and even what music to use? How do they decide where to advertise – what stations and what time slots? And what other ways can candidates advertise besides on television?

Why advertise?

One of the first candidates to use television advertising was Dwight Eisenhower in his 1952 presidential campaign. Back then, a candidate had to be convinced of the wisdom of advertising on television to reach voters. Today, television advertising is considered to be one of the most effective ways of reaching the largest number of voters with a message about a candidate.

Most candidates hire a "media consultant" to plan, research, and make their ads. These media consultants often start by conducting public opinion polls or by bringing small groups of people together in "focus groups" to see which issues are on the minds of voters. With this information in hand, they think about how their candidate's strengths and approaches to issues can be shown to address those concerns – or what information about their opponent might disturb voters. Then they go about designing an ad.

What elements go into making an ad?

Every element that goes into a political ad -- the words, the images, the music -- sends a message about that candidate or his or her opponent.

1. **The Script.** Most television ads are no more than 30 seconds in length and so they must package a lot of information into relatively few words. Media consultants begin by writing a script that uses relatively few words to get a strong message across. The script can:

- **Tell you something positive about the candidate.** The ad may focus on something the candidate proposes to do if elected:
"People shouldn't have to sit for hours in traffic. If I am elected, I will stop construction on busy roads at rush hour"
It can tell you about what the candidate has done in previous positions:
"Xavier Becerra: A strong voice in Congress for strengthening education."
It can tell you about the candidate's personal strengths:
"I know how to manage money. I will solve Philadelphia's fiscal problems."
Or it can tell you what organizations think so highly of the candidates that they have publicly endorsed him:
"Endorsed by the New York Times and the Newark Star-Ledger."



- **Tell you something negative about an opponent.** Some ads focus on telling voters about a negative quality of an opponent. It might focus on an opponent's positions ("Risky positions on Social Security and Medicare..."), personal characteristics, or lack of experience.
 - **Contrast the candidate with an opponent.** Still other ads compare the candidate sponsoring the ad to his or her opponent. "George Brown wants to raise property taxes, but Gloria Mendez promises to lower your property taxes."
2. **The Visuals.** A television ad must communicate not only with words, but with visuals as well.
- **How should the candidate appear?** (Should a candidate appear in a suit to make him seem important, or in shirtsleeves to show that he is a regular guy? Should a candidate be shown at a lectern to show her professional skills, or surrounded by children to show her nurturing side?) Often a negative ad about an opponent will pick the most unflattering photograph or video -- sometimes in black and white -- while a positive ad about a candidate will be in color.
 - **What location should be chosen for the ad?** The location of an ad can send messages about the kinds of things the candidate will focus on if elected. Ads may show candidates at a construction site with workers in hard hats -- to show they would be good for the economy and create jobs or in a classroom -- or with school children to suggest they would improve education.
3. **The Music.** Music sets the mood for an ad. If the appeal is positive, the music will be upbeat. If the ad criticizes an opponent, the music may be somber.

Where to Advertise?

Media consultants need to choose where to buy advertising time in order to try to reach the voters they hope to persuade, and they have many choices on broadcast and cable television or on radio. By choosing particular channels or a particular cable network, the campaign can try to "target" a particular "audience."

For example, if a presidential candidate thought he had good chance of appealing to men between the ages of 18 and 49, he might pick a spot during a NFL football game, while a mayoral candidate trying to reach women between the ages of 18 and 40 might choose the city's local cable carrier during Lifetime programs that attract women. (Cable advertising rates for local areas are relatively inexpensive.) Many local candidates advertise during local news programs.



Print Advertising: Local Newspapers, Direct Mail, Posters/Flyers

Candidates, especially in local elections, use print advertising, either because it is less costly than television or because it can be targeted more precisely to reach a particular audience with its message. For example, a candidate trying to target the city's Latino population may want to advertise in a Spanish-language newspaper. Or a candidate may decide to print up a flyer that can be mailed to likely voters in a section of a city. Other candidates print posters and have their supporters put them up along busy roads on supporters' lawns.

Don't Forget the Telephone!

In recent elections, candidates have "advertised" through programmed phone calls to voters urging support. You may pick up the phone before an election and hear the President of the United States at the other end—in a recorded message supporting one of your local candidates.



Campaign Advertising -- Selling the Candidates

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

After watching a political advertisement, fill out the following questionnaire.

Candidate Sponsoring the Ad _____

Name of Ad _____

1. What is the ad's central message or claim?

2. What information did the ad provide voters?

Positive information about the candidate _____

Negative information about an opponent _____

Comparison of the candidate with an opponent _____

1. What visuals are used to support the ad's claims?

How does the candidate sponsoring the ad appear in the ad?

How does the opponent appear in the ad?

Are locations or props used to support the claim of the ad?

2. Is any music used to support the claim? Describe the music used. To whom should it appeal?

3. What information in the ad is useful to you? What do you want to know that the ad doesn't tell you?

4. What would you do to increase the amount of useful information in the ad?

5. How do you think young voters would respond to the ad?





Are “Negative” Ad Campaigns Bad?

Like a sound bite, a negative—or so-called “attack”—campaign ad is assumed to be bad for democracy. Attack ads can be important and reliable sources of information in an election. Studies of ads run by presidential candidates show that, in general, attack ads are more accurate than ads supporting the virtues and record of a candidate (called “advocacy ads”). Attack ads, in fact, are more likely than advocacy ads to focus on proposed or past policies of those running for office.

What’s more, a certain kind of attack ad—one that compares a negative quality or stand by an opponent to a positive feature of the candidate running the ad, or so-called “contrast ad”—actually draws voters to the polls. That is because those kind of negative ads make it possible for voters to contrast the records and proposals of candidates. When campaigns point up the vulnerabilities of their opponents, they actually may be making distinctions that can help voters make informed decisions.

By dismissing all attack campaigning and criticizing those candidates who practice it, we penalize candidates for providing information that is often useful and truthful.

There is a harmful form of campaigning that uses ads that are inaccurate, misleading or dirty. Inaccurate or misleading ads, when left uncorrected by other sources, can lead voters to make incorrect assumptions about candidates. In recent years, some news organizations have carried out what are called “adwatches” through which journalists investigate the claims made in ads to determine whether or not they are accurate. Such adwatches provide a useful source of information to voters who may not have the time or resources to investigate claims on their own.

Nasty, inaccurate, or unfair campaign ads do a disservice to the political process not simply because they foster misinformation but because they suggest to the public that politicians are motivated purely by narrow self-interest and not by a set of beliefs in a course of policy.

The important point to keep in mind when evaluating any campaign ad is whether the ad is fair, accurate, and relevant to the campaign. For more information on accuracy in campaign ads, visit Factcheck.org at <http://www.factcheck.org>.

Source: Jamieson, K.H. (2000). *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...and Why You’re Wrong*. New York: Basic Books.



What is an “adwatch”?

An adwatch is an analysis of a political advertisement. When politicians are running for election or a special interest group wants to influence the public about an issue, they produce ads that tell citizens why they should vote for the candidate or issue or why they shouldn't. They usually tell the truth about themselves and their opponents in their ads, but sometimes they don't.

Ads also can provide information to voters to help them determine if the politicians are telling the truth, but sometimes they don't. Some political ads leave out important information that would help voters make a better decision about which candidate they prefer or which position on an issue to support. Others provide confusing information that misleads voters. The job of a good adwatcher is to find ads that are misleading or uninformative and correct any misinformation candidates or special interest groups are trying to spread. In this way, adwatchers help their fellow citizens make good voting decisions based on the real facts.

How do I do an adwatch?

The first step in analyzing a political ad is figuring out what kind of an ad you are looking at. This will help you to identify what claims the candidates or groups are making and how you can investigate them. There are three main types of political advertisements.

1) Advocacy Ad: This type of ad is only about the candidate who is sponsoring the advertisement. It might discuss the candidate's positions on one or more issues, her personal characteristics, or her experience in government. Issues advocacy ads focus only on the position favored by the group supporting the ad. In advocacy ads, there is no mention of the opponent.

2) Attack Ad: This type of ad is only about the candidate's opponent. It might criticize the opponent's issue positions, personal characteristics or lack of experience in government. In attack ads, there is little or no discussion about the candidate sponsoring the ad. An attack ad about an issue focuses on unfavorable consequences of adopting an opponent's positions or show how ill-founded opposing positions are. (See the note below.)

3) Contrast Ad: This type of ad compares the candidate sponsoring the ad to her opponent. It might compare their positions on specific issues, their personal characteristics or their level of government experience. This type of ad is often the most informative because it gives you reasons to vote for the candidate and explains why you should not vote for the opponent.

Note: People often think an ad is bad or “dirty” simply because it is an attack ad. This is not necessarily the case. It is important for candidates or groups to criticize their opponents as long as the criticism is about the opponent's positions on issues. Otherwise, voters would be unlikely to learn unfavorable information about candidates or might not learn good reasons not to support a particular position on an issue. To be a fair attack ad, it is also important that the criticism is accurate.



What is a Claim?

After you identify what type of ad you are analyzing, the next step is to identify what claims the candidate or issue proponent is making in the ad.

A claim is a statement a candidate or spokesperson for the issue makes that expresses something he or she believes is true. They also hope you will agree with that claim.

We all make claims every day. You might tell your friend that your teacher is giving you too much homework to finish in one night. When you say to your friend, “my teacher gives us more homework than I can finish in one night,” that is your claim. You believe that it is a true statement. Your teacher might disagree, but you will probably maintain your opinion because, based on your experience, it is your firm belief that it is true. Candidates and issues proponents do the same thing in their ads. For example, one of Bill Clinton’s ads from his 1996 presidential campaign says, “President Clinton expanded school anti-drug programs.” By putting this sentence in one of his campaign ads, Clinton is claiming to have expanded school anti-drug programs during his first term in office. A skilled adwatcher will want to make sure this claim is accurate.

What about evidence?

Evidence is a reason or a form of support for an argument that gives you a better idea about whether a claim is accurate.

It is easier to find out if a claim is accurate if an ad itself provides evidence in support of the claim.

You can think about how evidence helps a candidate or issues spokesperson make a more powerful argument in terms of the homework example given above. Perhaps your friend does not believe that you have as much homework as you claim to have. In response, you could give some evidence to demonstrate that your claim is accurate. Let’s imagine that you only have one teacher for all of your subjects. You might say that you generally have two hours of math homework per night, one hour of Social Studies, and two hours of English homework. You further explain that with soccer practice, eating dinner and the fact that school does not end until 4:00, you do not have enough time to do your work. Think about how much stronger your argument is with these additional facts.

Evidence also helps us to verify if the candidate or spokesperson for an issue is making a truthful claim. Remember that Clinton was claiming to have expanded school anti-drug programs. Possible evidence for Clinton’s claim would be a more detailed description of the anti-drug programs. Perhaps the ad might tell us where we could find a news story discussing these programs Clinton is claiming to have expanded. There could be testimony from teachers who used these programs or a description of legislation that was passed that allowed the programs to get funding. A researcher might give information on the positive difference the drug programs made in addressing the issue of drug use. Unfortunately, the ad provides none of these things. Therefore, it is up to the hard-working adwatcher to investigate the claim.



Where would I find evidence in support of (or contradicting) the claim?

Newspapers and online news sources are good places to start. First, the Student Voices website will have a lot of information about the candidates and issues. See if there are any stories on the website that address the issue in the ad. You can also go to the library and look at copies of your local newspaper. If you have archives of your local paper or papers available, you can look there for information about the candidate and the issues you are interested in. It is also possible that a phone call to the campaign or interest group's office might give you some good leads. In addition, much of what goes on in the government is recorded in documents such as the Congressional Record. Find out what types of records are kept by your local government. You can use these documents to find out what actions were taken by politicians in regard to specific issues.

What about the images?

Since most political ads are seen on television, the visual parts of the ads also make important claims. A good adwatch should include a description of the visuals and an analysis of what they seem to be telling the audience. For example, many ads show images of the opponent photographed in black and white. This makes the opponent look spooky and dangerous. Ads will also often present very unflattering images of the opponent. On the other hand, the candidate or groups sponsoring the ad might be shown in a warm, glowing light. This contrasts the candidate or someone who favors an issue with her opponent and says that, unlike her opponent, she will bring voters what is best.

In other types of visual claims, ads will show candidates or proponents of an issue surrounded by certain kinds of people. An ad might present a candidate standing among a group of police officers. This makes the claim that the candidate is in favor of tough law enforcement. Another example of this technique is when an ad shows a candidate in a factory, meeting with men and women in hard-hats. This type of image usually argues that the candidate will support labor unions. Sometimes, an ad will feature groups of people even when the candidate is not present. Senior citizens are frequently featured in political and issues ads. This generally implies that the candidate is in favor of maintaining Social Security or health care for retired people. An issues ad about the need for more funding for schools might show the person making the ad in an overcrowded classroom or a building that needs repair. It is important to look closely at the images in the advertisements and to think about the messages they are sending and whether or not those claims are supported by evidence.

It is also important to pay attention to the music heard during the ad. Just like black-and-white images, spooky music played during discussion of the opponent can send the message that the opponent or the opposing position is dangerous. Cheerful music, on the other hand, gives a positive feeling about the candidate or group sponsoring the ad. Listen to the music and consider how it makes you feel. It is a good clue for what the producer of the ad wants the audience to experience when viewing the ad.



Summary

The purpose of an adwatch is to help voters figure out what candidates and those who favor specific positions on issues are saying in their ads and to make sure that what they are saying is not misleading. In order to do this, we need to:

- Understand what type of ad we are looking at
- Identify the claims the candidate or issues proponent is making in the ad
- Look for evidence in the ad for the claims that are made
- Find outside evidence for the claims in the ad
- Verify that evidence presented in the ad is true
- Correct any misleading statements
- Figure out if there are any visual arguments
- Identify the sponsor

If we carefully analyze campaign and issues ads we can help ourselves and our fellow citizens become informed voters who make good decisions in the voting booth.



Adwatch Activity Sheet

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Analyze one of the campaign or issues ads, using the following form.

Ad text:

1) Which candidate or issues group is sponsoring the ad?

2) What kind of ad is it? (circle one) Advocacy Attack Contrast

3) What are the claims made in this ad?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____





4) Is there any evidence for these claims?

5) If so, what is the evidence?

6) Is there anything inaccurate or misleading about the claims?





7) Is there anything inaccurate about the evidence?

8) What evidence do you have for saying these parts of the ad are inaccurate?

9) Are there any places where the ad does not tell the whole truth (e.g. leaves out information that would change the meaning of the claim or make it easier to understand)?





10) What do the visual portions of the ad look like?

11) Do the visuals make any arguments? If so, what are they?





What Can We Learn from Candidates' Words?

While voters can get a lot of information about candidates from websites and advertising, there is another way to learn about those running for office: by listening to candidates speak in their own words—either in person or on television or radio.

Candidate forums or debates give voters a chance to hear candidates respond to questions about their positions on issues, their past experiences or their records in office. These questions may be asked by a moderator, by journalists, and sometimes by citizens—including high school students participating in Student Voices.

What can citizens learn by watching debates or by participating in candidate forums? How do debates and forums help citizens determine who to vote for or what kind of policies to support in their community?

✓ **The Person Behind the Words**

Many voters want to see what their candidates look and sound like in person or on TV before deciding who to vote for. They want to see how candidates, unscripted, respond to questions and issues to be able to judge how they would handle unexpected occurrences and even crises once in office. They want to see how a candidate backs up his or her position on an issue with evidence or argument.

✓ **Responding to Citizens' Concerns**

Candidates have control over the information and messages they put out on their websites and in their advertising. But debates and forums provide an opportunity for people outside campaigns to ask the candidates about issues or concerns they have and hear how the candidates would address them once in office. When students have the chance to pose questions to candidates, they can raise issues that are often overlooked by candidates and campaigns: issues of unique concern to youth.

✓ **Candidate Pledges on the Record**

The statements that candidates make during debates and forums give citizens the opportunity to learn what they would do if they were elected and to judge the performance of the officials who get into office. While many Americans believe that “politicians will say anything to get elected,” researchers have found that most politicians try to fulfill most of their campaign promises. As a result, voters can get a fairly accurate idea of what candidates will do in office by listening to these promises during a campaign. Statements made in a debate can provide a map for what that candidate is likely to do once in office.



Inviting Candidates to Class: A Template

Date

Name of Candidate
Street Address
City, State, ZIP code

Dear (*name of candidate*),

I would like to invite you to speak to one of my (*grade and subject area*) classes at (*school name*) this fall as part of the Student Voices project. The students would be prepared to ask you questions about issues of concern to them and their community. (*Dates*) are not good due to testing or days off.

The Student Voices project is a civic education initiative of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania that sets out to teach high school students about government and the importance of participation in the political process.

One of the centerpieces of the project is to bring students face-to-face with government officials and candidates, so that students feel as if their voices are being heard on issues of concern to them. These visits also show the students that their public officials are working to represent their interests.

I will be in touch with your office in the coming days to see if this kind of visit is possible, or you can reach me by phone at (*phone number*) or by e-mail at (*email address*). In the meantime, if you would like to learn more about Student Voices, please visit the website at <http://student-voices.org>

Sincerely,

Your name
Your school



Unit 4

Learning About Candidates: The Role of the Media

Unit Overview

Introduction

Students consider the role of a free press and the First Amendment in campaigns and the need for citizens to obtain information about candidates and issues from the news. Students learn about both traditional and newly emerging media forms and how they function to provide citizens with campaign information. They use media coverage to continue to collect information about the candidates and the issues they are studying in an upcoming election.

Lesson 1: The Importance of a Free Press in Democratic Elections

Students consider the role of a free press in a campaign. They examine the First Amendment's influence on media coverage of campaigns and consider what campaigns and elections might look like in a society without the freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment.

Lesson 2: The News Media, Candidates, and Issues

Students examine various forms of media and determine each form's strengths and weaknesses as a source of information about campaigns, using their research to fill out the "Candidates' Issues Position Chart."



Overview

Objectives of the Lesson

Students will:

- Examine citizens' information needs in a campaign
- Identify the role the media play in a campaign
- Understand the role of the First Amendment in ensuring access to information about campaigns

Preparation before Lesson 1

- Remind students to bring their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart** to class.
- Make one copy of **What If There Was No Freedom of the Press?** chart for each student.
- Make one copy of **Media Coverage of Campaigns** handout.
- Have available copies of a news story about a campaign issue.



Project Idea

- Students compare the news media's coverage of candidates' issue positions with the way that candidates describe their positions on issues in their campaign advertisements or on their websites.
- Invite a journalist (editor, reporter, editorial page editor, columnist, cartoonist) from your local newspaper to come to class to talk about how the newspaper covers a campaign.



Lesson Plan

1. Explain to students that today they will begin looking at how citizens can learn about candidates from the news media and the importance of the First Amendment for the media to provide independent information about candidates and issues in an election.
2. Remind students of the text of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Note that the only business mentioned is “the press” and the only institutions mentioned are “the press” and “religion.” Media provide a check on the government. The media are often a critical way for citizens to become informed about candidates. In today’s exercise, students will think about the various roles the media play and what would be lost if journalists were not able to play those roles. Discuss how and why the media are controlled in societies that are not free.

3. Hand out copies of **What If There Was No Freedom of the Press?** chart. Have students work in pairs or in small groups to fill out the chart, thinking about what kind of information each of the media forms provides in a campaign and what would be lost if they were not able to fulfill that role.
4. When students have finished, have them share their conclusions.
5. Hand out copies of the campaign news story and ask students to answer: How would this story be different if the First Amendment did not exist?
 - What is one piece of information about the issue that they have learned from the story?
 - What else would they like to know about the issue that the story did not answer?
6. Using the two exercises as a basis, brainstorm a list of roles that the media play in a campaign to provide citizens with the information they need to make decisions on Election Day. Write responses on the board. Ask students which role they think is most important to a democracy.



Assignment Suggestions

- Assign students different news media to examine before the next class. They may include:
 1. Local newspaper news pages (city, community, ethnic, special interest, or weekly; specify day)
 2. Local newspaper editorial pages (editorials/letters/op-eds/editorial cartoons)
 3. Local TV news (early morning, noon, early or late evening)
 4. Radio news
 5. Internet news source

Using the **Media Coverage of Campaign** handout, ask students to examine their news source on a specific date (or a specific time period) and gather data on the information that source provided about the campaign and the class's Youth Issues Agenda, and on the value of the source. Was the objective of their source to simply inform or to sway the readers' opinions in some way? Remind them to add any relevant information they find to their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**.

- Ask students to select one of the roles media play and write a paragraph about why they think that role is important to democratic society and what would be lost if there were no freedom of the press.
- Ask students to write an op-ed piece or a persuasive essay based on the following prompt:
A free and vibrant press is the cornerstone of a democratic society.



- Hold a mock editorial board meeting, in which some of the students portray the board while others portray the candidates and their advisors. After listening to each “candidate” present his or her case for election, the editorial board members choose which candidate to endorse and write an editorial. (See [How to Hold an Editorial Board Meeting](#) handout for tips.)
- Write Web Logs or “Blogs” in which students make observations about the campaign, the candidates, and the issues.
- Make a video about the candidates and their positions on the issues and show it in your school or on your local public access channel.



Lesson Plan

1. Ask students to report on their findings from monitoring different media sources. Each report should begin with a description of what the students expected to find, followed by a description of what information the students were able to find about the campaign or about their issues. Students should also share whether the information they gathered helped them add to their **Candidates' Issue Position Chart**. Ask students what they think the value of the source was for information on the campaign, the candidates, or the issues. Write on the board the name of the media source and its pros and cons as a source of information.

Example: Newspaper story about Candidate's Plan to Lower Taxes—Presents plan and analysis of plan

Example: TV News story showing Candidate's Endorsement by Police Union—Gives important information in short amount of time; lets voters hear candidate speak in his/her own words in acceptance

Example: Editorial cartoon—uses visuals and humor to get an important point across about a candidate

2. Ask students to compare the information they found in their media source to what they learned about the candidates and the issues from the candidates' own words—on their websites, in their advertising, in debates and forums, or in in-person meetings. Discuss the importance of having *independent* sources of information about the candidates.
3. Discuss with students the information they did NOT find in their media source that they would have found useful about the candidates and the issues.

Example: Information on where the candidates stand on issues

Example: Coverage of minor candidates on the ballot

4. What are some of the reasons why the media source may NOT have provided that information?
 - Limited number of reporters, limited time to research and find information
 - Limited space for coverage
 - TV needs visual stories
 - Radio needs sound
 - Media need to attract audiences and only want to devote a certain amount of time and space to political news
5. (Optional discussion extension): Hand out one copy of **What are Sound Bites...and are they bad?** to each student. Discuss the reading as a class.
6. Ask students how they think citizens might work with the media to bring to light information about candidates and issues NOT found in the media.
 - Writing letters-to-the-editor and op-eds about issues and candidates



- Creating Web Logs (Blogs) about the candidates, the campaign and the issues
- Creating Voter's Guides
- Working with public access television to disseminate information

Assignment Suggestions

- Using the [How to Write a Letter to the Editor](#) handout, have students write a letter to their local newspaper or to the media source they monitored, either in response to something they read in the newspaper or saw in the source, or to recommend that the media source change its coverage, or to offer information not available in the newspaper.
- Write an essay explaining the reasons for any differences between the media's coverage of candidates and how the candidates represent themselves in their own words. Refer to research from Unit 3 to develop your comparison.
- Write a 1-page essay analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of one of the forms of media you monitored in providing citizens with the information they need to make decisions in democratic elections.
- Compare media coverage of the candidates to the ways in which candidates represent their positions in their advertising, on their websites, in debates and forums or at in-person meetings.



What If There Was No Freedom of the Press?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Imagine a situation without freedom of the media. Besides affecting how we spend our leisure time, how might it hamper our ability to be informed, thoughtful, active citizens? How might it affect our ability to investigate, interpret, and evaluate issues and candidates' positions or qualifications for office?

What would happen without...	Possible Effects: (positive and negative)
Newspaper coverage on candidates' stands on issues and background profiles	
TV news coverage of candidates (appearances, interviews, endorsements)	
News coverage of polls	
News coverage of candidate endorsement by interest groups (e.g. teachers, police officers, NAACP)	
Newspaper "Fact check" of a candidate's claim	
Blogs about candidates and the campaign	
News on Internet portals	
Newspaper editorials endorsing a candidate	
Televised political debates	
Letters-to-the-editor or op-eds	





Media Coverage of Campaigns

Name: _____

Date: _____

News source	Date and time you monitored the source	Information you learned about the campaign or your YIA from the source

Why do you think the source(s) you monitored chose to cover the campaign or issue from your Youth Issues Agenda as they did? Was their intention to inform you, or to sway your opinion? Discuss your thoughts in the space below.





What Are Sound Bites...and are they bad?

When people say that a candidate “just talks in sound bites,” they are referring to the short phrases or slogans that candidates sometimes put into their speeches. These phrases summarize a position a candidate is taking or identify a strength the candidate wants to showcase. “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?” would be a sound bite an incumbent candidate might use to point out how much he or she has done in a first term of office. (Or a challenger might use it to showcase the incumbent’s weakness if it was clear that people felt things were worse). In contrast, “Are you ready for a change?” is a sound bite a challenger could use to suggest past policies have been harmful.

The reason that candidates try to come up with such short phrases is that they know the news media—especially television news programs—do not have time to run more than a small fragment of what they say on any given day. In fact, over the past thirty years, television news has tended to devote less and less time to direct statements from candidates in their political coverage. For example, in 1968 the average sound bite of a candidate on television news was 43 seconds. By 2000 the average time had shrunk to 7.8 seconds. If candidates hope to get their point across on television, they know they have to encapsulate their message into a sound bite.

But does that mean that sound bites are bad? Not necessarily. Sound bites can be either superficial or substantive. Substantive sound bites—short messages that boil down a complex and long speech to its essentials—can actually be quite useful in helping voters understand a candidate’s key positions. In fact, sound bites can help people learn in a few minutes what they might otherwise need hours to figure out. There are many “sound bites” that we all know convey important messages—like “I love you” or “Will you marry me?” And many sound bites that political figures have offered over the years have gone down favorably in history, such as “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” or “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” There is no reason to believe that brevity means superficiality, or that we cannot learn something about a candidate from a sound bite.

Source: Jamieson, K.H. (2000). *Everything You Think You Know About Politics...and Why You're Wrong*. New York: Basic Books.



How to Create a Voter's Guide

Using your Candidates' Issue Positions Chart, you can develop a Voter's Guide to help inform voters about who is running in the upcoming election, what their qualifications are and what past experience they have had, and what positions they have taken on issues of importance to young people and the community.

The following are some tips:

- Include all the candidates running for the office.
- Depending on the number of candidates, select 3-6 issues to highlight in the guide. Think about your Youth Issues Agenda.
- Ask the candidates their positions on the issues either through email, regular mail, by phone or, if you can't contact the candidate, through their website or newspaper articles. It is important to be accurate. Use language that doesn't show your opinion but states the candidates' positions fairly.
- Keep the brochure short and to the point. (People are more likely to read something that provides a summary of the candidates' positions on the issues.)
- Include information on registering to vote.
- Include who produced the brochure (i.e. your class or group, but do not list individuals' names). Consider setting up an email address for the project and include it on the brochure.
- If possible, translate the brochure into any languages appropriate for your community or school.



How to Write a Letter-to-the-Editor

Letters-to-the-editor are usually written in response to a news article, opinion piece, cartoon, and/or editorial in the newspaper. The letter-to-the-editor might praise, question or criticize something read or viewed in the newspaper.

To write an effective letter-to-the-editor, try to:

- Focus on one topic or issue
- Write in response to something you read or viewed in the newspaper. (If the newspaper isn't covering something you think should be covered, tie your letter to something that was covered and why you want something else or more coverage.)
- Write why you support, oppose or are questioning what was in the newspaper or the perspective in the newspaper
- Connect your experience as a high school student to the topic.
- Keep it brief and to the point – two paragraphs are usually enough. Write clearly and to the point.
- Include your name, address, and phone number. You may include your email address.

Sample Format:

Dear Editor:

On (date), in the article/opinion piece/editorial/cartoon (cite the headline or title and page), the author (may be an editor, news writer, guest writer of an opinion piece, or cartoonist) (write a summary of the main idea that you want to address.)

Indicate why you are writing: (you agree or disagree with the main point, you want more coverage, you find the piece too slanted, etc.)

Your idea or proposal (type of coverage, future coverage, range of opinions, another perspective, etc.)

Sincerely,

Your name
Address
Phone number
(email is optional)



Tips for Writing an Op-ed

“Op-eds” are opinion essays that get their name from being placed in a newspaper “opposite” the editorials, which state the newspaper’s position on an issue. They give people who are NOT on the staff of the newspaper a chance to have their say about something that concerns them. To write an effective op-ed, try to:

- Make your op-ed about one thing and one thing only.
- Make a point that you think others have ignored.
- Use your perspective as a high school student to make your point.
- Make it timely—about something happening NOW.
- Keep it between 500 and 700 words.

Try using the format below to write your op-ed:

1. HEADLINE: Write a headline for your op-ed using SIX to EIGHT words

2. GRAB THEIR ATTENTION: (Tell a story about the issue that concerns you — something that happened or that you witnessed RECENTLY.)

3. STATE YOUR POINT (In one sentence state the issue and where you stand.)

4. SUPPORT YOUR POSITION: (with statistics, quotes from experts, results of a study)

5. HAMMER IT HOME: (briefly summarize your point)





How to Hold an Editorial Board Meeting

Many newspapers choose to “endorse” or give their support to candidates before an election. Newspapers decide these endorsements at a meeting of their editorial boards. In local elections, editorial boards often invite the candidates to come into the newspaper’s offices and make a presentation on why they think they are the best person for the job. The newspaper’s editors will then ask the candidates questions to draw out more information about their qualifications and positions on issues.

Here is how you can conduct your own editorial board meeting and decide which candidate to endorse. In this exercise, some students will act as candidates, and some will act as editorial board members. You may want to conduct your meeting before a school assembly so that other students can watch and learn about the candidates. Here are the steps:

1. Each student should select a candidate in the upcoming election and an issue you think is most important in the election. (You may also choose to support a candidate based on how his or her qualifications or background in office would help confront the issue.) Form a pair with another student who has selected the same candidate and issue.
2. Using your Candidates’ Issues Position Chart, write a brief statement of support of the candidate and his/her stand on the issue or qualifications to address the issue. Share your responses with a partner. Students should then meet with others who are supporting the same candidate and formulate a presentation on behalf of the group.
3. Students should take turns making their case for a candidate before the class as a whole. Students who are not in the group should ask questions, or request clarifications and pose alternatives so that the presenting students have to defend their candidate.
4. Once all have had their say, a vote will be taken by the class to decide which candidate to endorse.
5. Those that vote in the majority will then write the proposed editorial.
6. Students in the group who have artistic talents may create an original political cartoon to accompany the editorial.
7. Students who voted for a different candidate should write an op-ed detailing why they disagree with the newspaper’s editorial endorsement and think another candidate should be supported.
8. The groups may come together as a full class and share their final editorials and op-eds and their reactions to the process. The class can vote on one final editorial and/or op-ed to publish or each group can publish its own.



1. HEADLINE

Young people are losing recreation options

2. GRAB THEIR ATTENTION

“What do you want to do?” My friends and I were asking each other that question all summer. We’ll be riding our bikes in the neighborhood on the days some of us don’t have to work at the mall and we try to figure it out. Should we go swimming? Oh yeah, the city closed our neighborhood’s pool and the rec center attached to it. What about the library? Our local branch was also shut down and we would have had to either catch a bus or get a ride to get to the nearest one. Go downtown or the mall? Sure, if we want to spend money on junk food, video games, clothes or other stuff we really don’t need. It’s a lot easier to find something to do during school since we have plenty of after school activities there or we can stop at the library on the way home. But what are teenagers like my friends and me supposed to do during the summer?

3. STATE YOUR POINT

With all the talk in the news about children and obesity or kids and drugs, our elected officials need to work on bringing back the pool, the rec center and the other recreation options that have been taken away from our community’s young people over the years.

4. SUPPORT YOUR POSITION

Last year, San Diego State University researchers found that the lack of physical activity was the most significant obesity risk factor contributing to obesity in 11- to 15-year-olds. I think that if the pool and the recreation center we had in our neighborhood was still there, there would be a lot more kids swimming and being active in my community. But don’t take my word for it. “Daily activities such as walking to school, physical education classes, after-school activities, chores and general playing have been replaced with a sedentary lifestyle in front of the TV, computer, or video games,” said Ken Germano, president of the American Council on Exercise. “This study highlights the need for effective physical activity programs targeted at young people. It is important for us to teach our kids to lead healthy and active lives now so they can avoid serious health problems in the future.” But obesity is not the only health issue that should push our local leaders to act. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, teens who are often bored are 50 percent likelier than those who are not often bored to smoke, drink, get drunk and use illegal drugs. Those illegal activities not only lead to addiction and bad health, they are also often the cause of other issues, such as dropping out of school or teen pregnancy. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, teens 15 and older who use drugs are 5 times more likely to have sex than are those teens who do not use drugs.

5. HAMMER IT HOME

I think our community’s elected leaders need to see that cutting programs and recreational opportunities for young people is not just a money issue. The lack of programs can lead to health issues as well as social problems. They should realize that they can make a difference in the lives of many young people and help the community at the same time. So, “What do you want to do?”



Unit 5

Making Your Voices Heard

Unit Overview

Introduction

Students learn how they can make their voices heard both before Election Day, when they can disseminate information to the media and to their peers and community about the candidates and issues that matter to them, and on Election Day, by taking part in a Mock Election.

Lesson 1: Media and Community Outreach

Students disseminate the information they have learned about candidates and the campaign through a variety of channels, from writing letters to the editor for their local or school newspaper, to publishing brochures or mounting websites to serve as Voters' Guides, or holding an in-school Issues Expo to educate their school or community about the candidates' positions on issues of importance to them.

Lesson 2: Mock Election

On Election Day, students carry out a mock election in their class or among fellow students in the school. They distribute ballots and tabulate results. Students consider what it would be like to live in a nation where citizens were not given the right to vote.



Overview

Objectives of the Lesson

Students will:

- Share their research on the campaign, candidates, and issues with the community

Preparation before Lesson 1

- Remind students to bring their [How to Write an Op-ed](#) and [Sample Op-ed](#) handouts to class.



Lesson Plan

1. If the class has prepared an Issues Expo on the candidates and the issues, use this class to hold the expo, inviting members of the school (seniors who are likely voters, teachers, administrators, parents) or local community.
2. If the class has prepared print materials to inform voters about the candidates and issues, use this class to disseminate the materials to the community.

Assignment Suggestion

- Have students use [How to Write an Op-ed](#) to write an op-ed about one of the issues on their Youth Issues Agenda and send it to their local or school newspaper.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Conduct a mock election
- Tally results to determine the mock election winners

Preparation before Lesson 2

- Make ballots for the mock election.

NOTE: To avoid the perception that your school or the Student Voices project favors one candidate over another, results from the mock election should not be shared or posted prior to the availability of actual election results.



Lesson Plan

- Ask the students to distribute ballots to voters. (The voters may include the members of your class, other selected classes, the entire school, district, etc.)
 - As a class: Ask students to cast their votes in the Student Voices election.
 - As a school: Students may cast their votes at a central location or several central locations.
- Students should let voters know how they will be able to find results from the mock election on the [Student Voices website](#) once votes are tabulated.
- Students should tabulate and submit results of the mock election to the Student Voices Web Editor for posting on the [Student Voices website](#).

NOTE: If there is time in this session, discuss with students how voters locate their polling place on Election Day, if they are voting for the first time.

Assignment Suggestions

- Ask students to find the results of the actual election and compare the results of the mock election with the results of the actual election.
- Ask students to calculate voter turnout results.



Unit 6

Analyze and Reflect

Unit Overview

Introduction

In this final unit of the Campaign curriculum, students analyze the election results as well as their own experiences over the past semester.

Lesson 1: Analyzing the Vote

Students examine election results and voter turnout data from the election, discussing possible reasons for the outcome as well as ways to increase voter turnout, particularly among young people.

Lesson 2: Writing to the Newly Elected Official

Students exercise their ability to make their voices heard by drafting a letter to one of the officials who won in the election. Letters can focus on issues from the Youth Issues Agenda or on ways to increase voting.

Lesson 3: Reflection

In the final Student Voices lesson, students reflect on all their accomplishments over the course of the term by returning to the Civic Action Continuum and writing an essay about their experiences. The activity also challenges students to continue the work they began and stay active in the local community.



Overview

Objectives of the Lesson

Students will:

- Compare actual election results to their mock election results
- Discuss possible reasons for election results
- Discuss ways to increase voter turnout, particularly among 18- to 24-year-olds

Preparation before Lesson 1

- Make one copy of [Why Don't We Vote? And What Can Be Done About It?](#) for each student.
- Make one copy of [Writing a Position Essay](#) for each student.



Lesson Plan

- Option 1:** If turnout figures are available for the previous week's election, compare the actual voter turnout numbers to those from your class's mock election. Discuss reasons why voter turnout was the same or different for the nation.
Option 2: If turnout figures are NOT available for the previous week's election, show students' turnout numbers from some other past election. As a class, brainstorm reasons why voter turnout was less than 100 percent in the past election.
- Hand out **Why Don't We Vote? And What Can Be Done About It?** Have students individually fill in the first section.
- As a class, brainstorm ways to overcome the obstacles to voting that the class has found.
 - Using the second section of the handout, have students individually fill in the solution they think would be most effective in getting more Americans to vote.
 - Ask students to provide three reasons why they believe their chosen solution will overcome the problem of low voter turnout in America.

Assignment Suggestions

- Have students use the worksheet to develop an op-ed or 5-paragraph expository essay on their solution. (The template **Writing a Position Essay** may be helpful to your students.)
- Your students can send the op-eds to your local newspaper or for consideration for publication on the **Student Voices website**. They may want to send essays to local or state election officials for their consideration.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that citizens and elected officials need to communicate with each other even after Election Day
- Write a letter to the newly elected official on the students' chosen issue or ways to increase voter turnout

Preparation before Lesson 2

- Remind students to bring their [Candidates' Issue Position Chart](#)
- Remind students to bring their [Media Coverage of Campaign](#) handout with the results of their monitoring one media source for campaign information

★ Project Idea

Contact your local newspaper about publishing students' letters to the newly elected officials.



Lesson Plan

1. Discuss with students the need for citizens to continue to provide input to government officials once they are elected and to hold officials accountable for the promises they made during the campaign. Remind students that democracy is a two-way street, and it is the job of both elected officials and citizens to stay in contact with one another about issues of importance to the community.
2. Today, they will be drafting letters to one of the candidates who recently won the election. Explain that the purpose of the letter is to provide their suggestions on what course of action the official should pursue in office with regard to their issue.
3. Hand out the template **Writing to the Newly Elected Official** and have students begin writing a letter to the official about the issue they studied this semester during the campaign. (The template **Sample Op-Ed** from Unit 4 may also be helpful to your students.)

Students may also choose to use their ideas from **Why Don't We Vote?** to write to the official about how he or she may take actions to encourage more young people to get involved in government and to vote.

Assignment Suggestions

- Complete letters and send to the newly elected official.
- Write a 1-page essay describing why it is important for citizens to stay in contact with candidates once they have been elected and why it is important for candidates to stay connected to voters after Election Day.



Overview

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Reflect on their accomplishments over the course of the semester
- Understand that civic engagement is an ongoing responsibility for all citizens

Preparation before Lesson 2

- Make one copy of the [I-Search Reflection Essay](#) worksheet for each student.
- Make one copy of the [Civic Actions Continuum](#) worksheet for each student.
- Remind students to bring their Civic Actions Continuum worksheets they filled out in their first class of Student Voices.



Lesson Plan

1. Distribute copies of the **Civic Actions Continuum** worksheet to each student. Have students fill out the worksheet and answer the questions at the bottom.

NOTE: Students should not refer to their **Civic Actions Continuum** worksheets from the first Student Voices class until AFTER they have filled out a new sheet.

2. Ask students to compare the worksheet they just filled out with the **Civic Actions Continuum** worksheet they filled out in the first Student Voices class.
3. In pairs or small groups, students should discuss how their attitudes have changed over the course of the semester. Discuss the small groups' findings as a class. Why do students think their attitudes changed? What role did experiencing some of the items on the list play in changing their ideas?
4. Distribute copies of the **I-Search Reflection Essay** worksheet to each student.
5. Remaining in their small groups, ask students to begin thinking about answers to each of the questions on the sheet. Ask them to share their answers to each question and discuss how they plan to write their essays. Remind students to take notes on their answers as they talk in their small groups, as these ideas may be helpful in structuring their essays.
6. Have students begin to write their essays.

Assignment

- Complete I-Search essay.



Why Don't We Vote? What Can Be Done About It?

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Typically, America has low voter turnout compared to other democracies in the world. According to the International Institute for Democracy and Assistance, U.S. voter turnout ranks 114th out of 140 nations that held democratic elections between 1945 and 1998. Turnout is generally higher in years when we elect a president, but in “off-years,” when we elect many of our local officials, turnout tends to be less than 50 percent.

People have come up with plenty of reasons to explain why America has such low voter turnout compared to other democracies in the world. For example, some researchers have found that Americans vote less than other countries because we have more elected offices to vote for. Others have found that there are too many barriers to voting, such as requiring that people register to vote one month before an election to be eligible to participate. You discussed other reasons at the beginning of the semester in the handout “Who votes?” Now let’s reconsider the question.

Why do you think we have low voter turnout in America?

There are many solutions currently being offered to fix the problem of low voter turnout in America. For example, six states have adopted same-day registration policies, which allow voters to register to vote on the same day as an election. Some groups think that Election Day should be moved to Veterans’ Day so that voters can take the day off.

Based on the reason you wrote above, what do you think is the best solution to the problem of low voter turnout in America?

Give three reasons why the solution you propose will solve the problem of low voter turnout in America.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____





Writing to the Newly Elected Official

Use this template to write a letter to your next president, senator, congress member, or other local elected official—and offer your ideas to the person who will represent you in government.

(Date)

Title—Name

Street Address

City, State, ZIP code

Dear _____,

Congratulations on your election. I am a student at (your high school) in (your city and state) and my class has been studying the issues and candidates in your election through the Student Voices project. Now that you have been elected, I would like to offer my suggestion on how to (your idea on how to deal with an issue you studied or how to increase voting).

The issue we have been studying is (name of the issue). We think this is a problem because (reasons why the issue is important to your community). We see evidence of this issue in our community (describe the issue in your community).

During your campaign, you said you would deal with this issue by (describe candidate's approach to dealing with the issue). I (agree/disagree) with this approach because (describe why you agree or disagree with the way that the newly elected official will deal with your issue – you may also want to describe your approach to dealing with the issue).

I look forward to following your progress on this issue during your time in office. Thank you for considering my ideas.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

(Your street address)

(City, state, ZIP code)



I-Search Reflection Essay

Directions

Write a narrative essay that reflects on all that was accomplished during the Student Voices Project. The I-Search essay should not just answer what conclusion you came up with, but also the process that you went through to arrive at your conclusion.

The I-Search essay should answer the following questions:

- What was your group's issue? Why did you choose this issue?
- What process did you use for your research? What worked and what did not work in researching your issue? Be specific. Did you do a survey? How was it completed? Was your research primarily online? What sites did you use? What role did elected officials play in completing your research?
- What was the plan or policy you developed for the Mock Local Government Session or Mock Budget Hearing? How did your plan or policy change after the Mock Local Government Session or Mock Budget Hearing?
- How was the final product created?
- What were your thoughts when the product was presented to the class or to elected officials? What was their reaction and feedback?
- What can you do next with your experience? How can you continue to follow this issue(s)?

It may be necessary to talk with members of your group and to consult your portfolio of Student Voices materials for guidance. Use the space below to write an outline for your essay.



Writing a Position Essay

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

[Introductory Sentence] *After discussing the issue of* _____

I believe that the major cause of this problem is _____

I think the best way to address this issue is _____

There are three reasons why I am suggesting this idea. [Three reasons, with examples]
First, _____

A second reason is _____

Finally, _____

[Summary sentence] *After thinking broadly about the issue and weighing the pros and cons of various solutions about the issue of* _____, *I think* _____

