



Educator Resources

Wisconsin Vote is a service of Wisconsin Public Television and Wisconsin Public Radio.



Wisconsin Public Television

Introduction to the Election Process

- GRADES 3-4
- SOCIAL STUDIES, INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

OBJECTIVES

Students will role play the election process, which includes declaring candidacy, campaigning, voting in a primary, and voting in a election.

Students will work with a small group to create a one-minute commercial supporting a candidate vying for class president.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Social Studies

Standard C: Political Science and Citizenship

C.4.5 Explain how various forms of civic action such as running for political office, voting, signing an initiative, and speaking at hearings, can contribute to the well-being of the community

Wisconsin’s Model Academic Standards for Information and Technology Literacy

Standard A: Media and Technology

A.4.5 Use media and technology to create and present information

MATERIALS

- *Primary Ballot and Election Ballot* (provided, one for each student)

- Video recorder, such as a camcorder or a phone camera
- Music and sound effects (e.g., resource such as *Soundzabound*, available at WIMediaLab.org)

PROCEDURE

First ask students to name jobs that are elected positions. Responses may include: president of the United States, mayor, and classroom jobs. Tell students that most elections for local, state, and national leaders typically follow a similar process. Together, create a list of the steps in the election process. These steps should include:

1. Declare candidacy
2. Campaign
3. Vote in a primary election or caucus (if necessary)
4. Campaign
5. Vote in a general election

Define candidacy, campaigning, primary election, caucus, and general election while listing the steps.

Tell students they are going to follow the election process to select a class president. Provide students five minutes to silently journal and reflect on if they would or would not like to be class president and why.

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Next, instruct students interested in running for class president to declare their candidacy by writing their name on poster paper or a place where all students can see it, creating a candidate list.

Afterward, tell students that during campaigns, candidates often give speeches to discuss issues or topics that affect the people voting. They do so to share their thoughts and opinions with the public and to earn people's votes. Have the class choose two issues they would like the candidates to discuss. These issues may be the classroom seating arrangement, how classroom rewards are given to students, lining-up procedures, etc.

Instruct the candidates to write a short speech, which they will read to the class that tells their opinion on the issues the class chose. Tell students who are not candidates to individually create a list of questions they have for the candidates such as, "How will you improve book checkout procedures?" Encourage students to write questions about things the candidate can realistically accomplish in the classroom. Provide students with approximately 15 minutes to complete their assigned tasks.

Next, invite each candidate to read their speech and have two students each ask one question to the candidate. Remind the class to thoughtfully consider who they think may be the best leader for their class based on the candidates' responses.

Once all speeches are complete, inform students they will now vote in a primary election, which will determine the two final candidates that will continue to run for class president. Provide all students with a *Primary Ballot*, and instruct them to write a candidate's name of their choosing. Count the students' votes and reveal the two candidates who received the most votes. It is recommended you do not share the total number of votes each candidate received during the primary to prevent conflict or hurt feelings amongst the students.

Inform students they will now campaign for one of the candidates. To do so, either ask students to divide themselves or you divide them into four equal groups, two groups for each candidate. Each candidate will only be in one group; two groups will not have a candidate, but they will support one candidate. Instruct students to create a one-minute campaign commercial with their group that they will video record. If possible, show students several real-world campaign commercials to help them generate ideas for their commercial. Each group's commercial must:

1. State the candidate's name.
2. Explain why the candidate should be elected class president.
3. Tell three things the candidate will do as the class president (those without the candidate in their group will need to ask the candidate for their response).

Tell students that all group members must help create the commercial. Some tasks include:

- Director: Keeps group members on task and monitors time to ensure the commercial is one-minute long
- Camera person: Video records the commercial
- Script writer: Writes the words for the commercial
- Sound managers: Finds and plays music and sound effects for the commercial using a resource such as *Soundzabound*, available at WIMediaLab.org.
- Actors: Act in the commercial

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Give students ample time to create, rehearse, and video record their commercial. When complete, play the commercials for the class. After each commercial, instruct students to take notes about the important information in the commercial. You may want to play the commercials a second time so students have a full understanding of each candidate's ideas.

Next, inform students that when people vote, they have the option to vote for a write-in candidate, or a person that was not selected to be on the ballot during the primary. Also tell students that in Wisconsin, voters have to vote using either a machine similar to a computer or a paper ballot. On paper ballots, the voter has to fill in an oval next to the candidate's name of their choosing, which is what the students will be doing to vote for class president.

Provide each student with an *Election Ballot*. If possible, have the candidates' names already printed on the ballot. After students vote and all ballots are returned, total the votes and announce the winner.

Review with students the election process, discussing with students what the class did during each step for the class president election.

Also discuss with students why it is important to be informed voters, understanding the candidate's ideas and qualifications and how elections can affect a community.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

As a class, evaluate the students' commercials, asking students:

- What made this an effective commercial?
- What could be improved?
- What in this commercial made you want to vote for this candidate?
- What in this commercial made you not want to vote for this candidate?

INTRODUCTION TO THE ELECTION PROCESS

PRIMARY BALLOT AND ELECTION BALLOT

Primary Ballot

Write one candidate's name: _____

Primary Ballot

Write one candidate's name: _____

Election Ballot

To vote, completely fill in the oval. You may vote for one.

For Class President

_____ write-in

Election Ballot

To vote, completely fill in the oval. You may vote for one.

For Class President

_____ write-in