

ELECTION 2008

Instructional Unit Resource Guide

Based on Principles of Universal Design and Differentiated Instruction



Unit: Election 2008, 9th grade
Unit Objective: Students will achieve an understanding of the U.S. electoral process, gain a familiarity with the candidates, and participate in a mock election.
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School Corporation: Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation
School: Columbus East High School

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Message to the Reader / Teacher

I currently teach 9th grade world civilizations and have been teaching for seven years. All of the 9th grade students at East High School are placed into one of four interdisciplinary houses, or teams. Each house has approximately 100 students. This design is called small learning communities and has been in place at East High School for four years. My current teaching responsibilities include providing instruction for the world civilizations classes as well as coordinating the small learning communities program. In regards to technology, I have used LCD projectors in the past as well as more traditional technology. However, this project allowed me to use new technologies including the airliner device and the CPS system.

This project focused on the 2008 election. Per state law, social studies teacher are required to teach the election process for two weeks leading up to a Presidential election. This unit was designed for 9th grade students who are part of an interdisciplinary team that includes an English teacher, a keystone (technology) teacher and a world civilizations teacher. Each teacher conducted activities in their class that related to the election project. The project focused on understanding the Electoral College using websites like www.270towin.com, identifying the presidential candidate that students would support based on online surveys, researching, as a group, a relevant social, economic, military, or political topic related to the election and presenting both candidates view on the topic. Then, as a group, students decided which candidate had the best solution for their issue and created propaganda for that candidate. The propaganda could be a poster, a flyer, or a commercial. The students also participated in a mock election using National Student/Parent Mock Election website. Lastly, students watched the concession and acceptance speeches of the candidates and used Moodle to reflect on the outcome of the election. This project took two weeks to complete.

This unit was designed for several reasons. First of all, it is required the state to teach the election process during a Presidential election year. Second, because I teach 9th grade students, they will be voters in the next election and therefore were encouraged to pay close attention to this election so they would know the process and be familiar with the issues that are relevant to an election. The election of 2008 was also a historical one and I wanted to be sure that students were exposed to it in an academic setting that allowed for discussion and reflection. Students were highly engaged during this project and commented favorably about the integration of the new technologies.

If you have questions about this project, below is my contact information.



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Standards and Benchmarks

What standards will be met by teaching this unit?

As stated earlier, Indiana state law requires the election process to be taught by all social studies teachers during a Presidential election. There are some Indiana state World Civilizations and History standards that were met in this unit too. They are below.

1. Indiana State Law Code: 1C 20-30-5-4

System of government; American history

Sec. 4. (a) Each public school and nonpublic school shall provide within the two (2) weeks preceding a general election for all students in grades 6 through 12 five (5) full recitation periods of class discussion concerning:

- (1) the system of government in Indiana and in the United States;
- (2) methods of voting;
- (3) party structures;
- (4) election laws; and
- (5) the responsibilities of citizen participation in government and in elections.

(b) A student may not receive a high school diploma unless the student has completed a two (2) semester course in American history.

(c) If a public school superintendent violates this section, the state superintendent shall receive and record reports of the violations. The general assembly may examine these reports.

As added by P.L.1-2005, SEC.14.

2. Standard WH.9: Historical Thinking

Students will conduct historical research that incorporates information literacy skills such as forming appropriate research questions, evaluating information by determining accuracy, relevance and comprehensiveness, interpreting a variety of primary and secondary sources and presenting their findings with documentation.

3. Standard WH.9.2

Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past.

4. Standard WH.9.5

Use technology in the process of conducting historical research and in the presentation of the products of historical research and current events.

5. Standard WH.9.6

Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue.

For more information on the standards listed above, visit

<http://dc.doe.in.gov/Standards/AcademicStandards/StandardSearch.aspx>

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Planning Pyramid

What should students know?

Some students will know

- ✓ How to recognize biases in political elections
- ✓ Why there is controversy surrounding the Electoral College structure
- ✓ How voting patterns are developed and utilized by the candidates
- ✓ How state voting trends change over time and understand the significance of changes in the way states vote

Most students will know

- ✓ The main "hot topics" in the election and how conservatives and liberals view the topics
- ✓ How the Electoral College is organized based on Congressional representation
- ✓ How Indiana has voted in past elections

All students will know

- ✓ The main platform of each candidate
- ✓ The candidate that they would support based on the issues
- ✓ How the Electoral College plays a role in the election
- ✓ What propaganda is and how it is used in elections

Teacher Library

What materials and resources will be useful for teachers?

Within this unit, the following web sites provided good resource tools to use.

1. The following site provides an interactive Electoral College map and allowed students to make predictions for the 2008 election by changing the colors (red vs. blue state) on the map. Students used this resource to understand voting patterns and trends by state and to be able to recognize swing states.

www.270towin.com



2. The two following websites were online political quizzes for students to see which candidate they would support based on the issues.

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/candidate-match-game.htm>

<http://www.votechooser.com/>



3. The next website allowed students to see how the candidates stood on all the important issues of the election.

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/issues/issues.abortion.html>

4. The last website provided a resource for students about primary and general elections.

http://www.votesmart.org/election_president_state_primary_dates.php

Learner Activities

What materials and resources will be useful for engaging students in meaningful learning activities?

During this unit, it is important to have some technology available to get the most out of using the websites and the CPS system. I have access to an LCD projector which allowed me to broadcast various websites. In addition, I used an airliner, or a mobile mouse, to allow students to manipulate the interactive websites. Having access to a computer lab is essential as students will need to be able to research issues pertaining to the election as well as the candidates. Computers are also used in the production of the propaganda.

Also, students participated in a mock election. The website that hosted the mock election was <http://www.schoolperceptions.com>. After taking the online quizzes, completing the research project, creating propaganda, and exploring Electoral College voting trends, students voted for themselves. The ballot that was posted on the School Perceptions web site was the same ballot used in the state of Indiana and including Congressional races and other elections as well.

Software programs like Movie Maker and Publisher were used to create the propaganda. Moodle, an online source for classroom management, was used for students to reflect on the outcome of the election.

Mock Election Website:



The learner activities that students engaged in throughout the project include:

- ✓ Researching a political or social topic and both candidates' view on that topic
- ✓ Creating a PowerPoint presentation explaining the topic and the views of the candidates
- ✓ Selecting the candidate that they support and creating a piece of campaign propaganda for the candidate. Propaganda included campaign posters, flyers, and TV commercials.
- ✓ Participating in online voter surveys and a mock election
- ✓ Manipulating the 2008 Electoral College map using www.270towin.com and making predictions on Electoral College vote totals
- ✓ Watching the concession and acceptance speeches after Election Day and reflecting on the outcome of the election via Moodle postings.

Assessment

What materials and resources will be useful for assessing student knowledge and skills?

Students were assessed in a variety of ways for this project. Rubrics were used to assess student progress. The following rubric was used to guide and assess students through the research phase of this project.

Rubric for topic/candidate research:

Criteria	Exceptional 12-15 pts	Commendable 9-11 pts	Emerging 0-8 pts
Topic Research	Topic is defined and an explanation of why it is controversial is given. Topic is presented in an unbiased way.	Topic is partly defined and there is an attempt to explain why it is controversial.	Topic is not defined or effectively explained. No clear reasons are given for why the topic is controversial.
Presentation	Presentation effectively presents topic and group uses PPT in a professional way.	Presentation is fairly effective and the PPT is mostly professional.	Presentation is inadequate and the PPT is not effective.
Propaganda	Propaganda is effective and creative. Group incorporates several propaganda techniques.	Propaganda is fairly effective and an attempt to be creative is made.	Propaganda lacks effectiveness and creativity.
Work Ethic/Effort	Group uses lab time and class time effectively. Work is completed on time and all requirements are met. Best work is evident.	Group uses most class and lab time effectively. Project is completed on time with all requirements met.	Group does not use lab and class time effectively. Project lacks required information. Best effort was not given.

In addition to the use of rubrics, students were also informally assessed by the posting on Moodle. After the election, students watched the speeches and had to respond to the posting of: "How do you feel about the outcome of the election? What will be the biggest challenge facing the new president?" All of the teachers on the team logged in and read the reflections. This was really interesting because while not all students will answer that set of questions in a classroom, most students will log on and post an answer.

Possible resources for locating assessment materials:

Rubric:

<http://www.rcampus.com>

Many rubrics available for various activities.

Modifications: Planning for Academic Diversity

LEARNING BARRIER	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	WEB RESOURCES
<p>Student cannot read at grade level. Student has difficulty comprehending the material.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust text using the Microsoft auto summarize to provide multiple levels of complexity • Provide text paired with graphics using Picture It Software. • Provide text-to-speech options such as Kurzweil or Read Please • Provide text in audio file format for MP3 players/iPod. • Provide graphic organizers • Provide access to SOLO software • Provide text paired with graphics using Picture It Software or Board Maker Picture Symbols • Reading Pens • Provide graphic representations of synonyms and antonyms 	<p> www.readplease.com www.bensguide.gpo.gov www.windows.ucar.edu www.inspiration.com </p>
<p>Student has difficulty mastering the vocabulary of the unit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide text paired with graphics using Picture It Software or Board Maker Picture Symbols • Reading Pens • Provide graphic representations of synonyms and antonyms 	<p> www.visualthesauras.com www.visuwords.com </p>
<p>Student has difficulty with handwriting (speed or accuracy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide word prediction programs, such as WriteOutloud or Co:Writer • Allow access to computer or word processing, such as Dana Smarts • Provide access to SOLO software 	<p> www.donjohnston.com </p>
<p>Student has difficulty with calculating activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide student with calculating tools, such as calculators, websites, and math manipulatives 	<p> http://nlvm.usu.edu www.webmath.com www.google.com </p>
<p>Student needs help with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide starting points using student friendly search 	<p> www.aresearchguide.com www.ipl.org/div/aplus/ </p>

conducting research.	<p>engines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to SOLO software 	<p>www.archives.gov</p> <p>www.loc.gov</p> <p>www.googleearth.com</p> <p>www.babelfish.ahavista.com</p>
Student needs the instructional material in a language other than English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students use a language translating tool. 	<p>www.babelfish.ahavista.com</p>
Student needs additional challenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with review and recall, using on-line quizzes to test knowledge. 	<p>www.quizstar.com</p>