



A Union of Professionals

2008 Historic Election: A Teachable Moment AFT-Designed Lesson Plan

Understanding the 2008 Presidential Election Process

Grades: 3-6 (an option for pre-K-3 is included at the end of the lesson plan).

Content areas: Language arts and social studies

Objectives: Students will be able to understand the presidential election process and will be able to create a timeline to describe the important events that led to the election of President Barack Obama.

Materials needed: Index cards, newspapers, magazines and Web sites

Instructional procedures: Frame the lesson with a KWL (an instructional strategy that assesses prior knowledge by asking students what they already **know**, what they **want to know** and, at the completion of the lesson, what they have **learned**) for the whole group about the recent campaign and election.

KWL

*What they already **know***

- Divide students into 10 groups. Give each group an index card with one of the election terms listed below.
- Have students in each group brainstorm what they already know about their group's assigned term in general and as it relates to the 2008 election.

*What they **want to know***

- Using their brainstormed list, have students in each group think about what more they want to know about the term. What questions do they have and/or what did they disagree about when pulling together their group's list? Groups also should generate questions specific to the 2008 election.

Lesson Activity

- Using their questions as a guide, students in each group will research and record information about each term as it relates to the recent campaign and election.
- Once the questions are answered, each group will use the questions and answers to create a news story; one student is selected to serve as a “reporter” who asks questions about the group’s assigned term and the 2008 election to one or more students that the reporter is interviewing (depending on how many students are in each group). For example, this could be similar to asking people questions on the street or could be a panel of “experts” similar to a Sunday morning talk show.
- As each group presents its news story, the other groups will observe and take notes about each of the terms and how they relate to the election process, i.e., what they are and when they occur.

- After each group reports out, the entire class will complete a timeline of events led by the teacher. Depending on the grade level, teachers can use a variety of media-related sources. e.g., newspaper articles; photos that depict voters, people campaigning, the candidates themselves. To assess understanding, the teacher will ask students to identify the events and decide where they should be placed on the election timeline. Engage students in a discussion about the length of the campaign, the time between the primaries and the general election as well as between the general election and the inauguration.

What they learned

- Ask students what they have learned as a result of the timeline activity. Record their responses on an overhead, flip chart, etc. Have students write a paragraph titled: “What we learned about the 2008 presidential election process.”
- These reports could be used at schoolwide gatherings, parent-teacher nights where student work is featured.

Terms

Candidates for president and vice president

Primary/general elections

Campaign

Conventions

Debates

Polling

Electoral votes

Popular votes

Election Day

Inauguration Day

Extension activity

Based on their research, ask students how they would change the presidential election process if they could and why? Have them write a letter to President Obama explaining their suggested changes and the reasoning behind them.

For younger students (pre-K-3):

- Have students identify pictures of the president and the White House, as well as a map of the United States, and have them describe the significance of each.
- Discuss the job of the president and the importance of his work.
- Read *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope* by Nikki Grimes—a biographical picture book about Obama, and ask students questions about the new president based on the book.