

Meet the Presidential Candidates in Election 2016 – Lesson Plan

Subjects

Social Studies, Government, Civics

Estimated Time

Two to three 45-minute periods

Grade Level

9 - 12

Objective

Students will:

1. Get to know the candidates running for president in Election 2016 and where they stand on important issues.
2. Work as a class to create a flow chart documenting the steps a candidate must take to be elected to the presidency.
3. Participate in a class discussion about the number of candidates, the reasons people seek to be president and the election process.
4. Utilize research skills to create a profile of a specific candidate and his/her qualifications, point of view on various topics, and presidential campaign.
5. Present their candidate profile projects to classmates.
6. Monitor the progress of the presidential candidates and participate in classroom discussions about the success of the various campaigns.

Background

A multitude of candidates are hoping to win their party's nomination for the 2016 presidential election. Between now and election day, many candidates will enter and leave the race for a variety of reasons. Eventually, each party will use its convention to choose the candidate they will endorse and those nominees will battle it out until one is elected as our next president. This lesson examines the political process, the candidates and their platforms, and the ultimate outcome of Election 2016.

Procedure

1. Explain to students that running for president is a multi-step process that requires a candidate to invest a significant amount of time, effort and money. To help students see and understand more about this process, work as a class to create a flow chart that outlines the process that a presidential candidate will go through on the road to being elected to the presidency. You may use flow chart paper or create a flow chart using Microsoft Word or Excel. Some of the major steps included in this chart could be:
 - Step 1: Formation of Presidential Exploratory Committee
 - Step 2: Announcement of intention to run for president based on findings of exploratory committee
 - Step 3: Fundraising and gathering of support and endorsements from the general public as well as other politicians, special interest groups, corporations, etc.
 - Step 4: Campaigning early, particularly in states where primaries are especially important (i.e. Iowa, New Hampshire, home state, etc.)
 - Step 5: Continuing to campaign to beat out all other opponents from within your own party.
 - Step 6: Attending your party's National Convention and securing the nomination of the party.
 - Step 7: Campaigning nationwide against your opponents from other parties
 - Step 8: Winning the election and securing enough electoral votes to be named the next president.
2. Once students understand the process candidates go through to become president, facilitate a short discussion related to the selection of candidates using questions such as: Becoming president is a long, difficult and expensive process. Why do you think so many candidates from each party are willing to attempt this process in order to become the next president?
 - How does having a large number of candidates for each party complicate the election process?
 - In what ways is having a large number of candidates to choose from a positive thing for U.S. citizens?
 - What responsibilities do voters have when it comes to selecting a candidate to represent their political party?
 - Do you think it is important to elect the president based on his/her political platform? Prior experience as a leader? Ability to connect with and understand the average American? Which of these is most important to you?
3. In an election where 15+ people from the two major political parties have announced their candidacy, it can be difficult to know and understand each candidate's platform and position on important political issues. To help students get a better understanding of the candidates who are running, distribute the [CANDIDATE PROFILE HANDOUT](#) to each student. Randomly assign students in the class to research one of the presidential candidates.



- *NOTE: Early in the election process, there will be many candidates. As the field narrows and candidates leave the race, it may be beneficial to have students work in pairs or small groups to conduct their research about a specific candidate. If you have already completed this activity, work as a class or allow students to complete additional candidate profiles for extra credit so that all candidates can have displays throughout the classroom.*
- 4. Encourage students to use NewsHour online stories along with other Internet and primary source materials to gather information about the candidate they are researching.
- 5. After the Candidate Profile Handout and project are completed, have each person/pair/small group present their candidate profile project. Post these in a prominent place in the classroom. As candidates leave the race and the parties select their candidates at their national conventions, make note of who has left the race by marking it on the Candidate Profile project.
- 6. As candidates leave the race, take time to discuss specific events that allowed certain candidates to advance while others withdrew or were forced out of the race. This could also be done as a written response activity to be completed by each student. Address questions such as:
 - Was there a specific issue, incident, or point of view that caused this candidate to be unsuccessful in his/her bid for the presidency? If so, explain.
 - Throughout the course of his/her campaign, did this candidate stand by his/her political platform, or did s/he make changes along the way in an attempt to win voter support. Explain.
 - Would you have supported this candidate in his/her attempt to become president? Why?

Extension Activities:

1. As the election process moves forward, there will be debates between candidates and lots of information about each one's plans for leading the country. Create a display area near the candidate profiles where students can bring in newspaper, magazine, or Internet news articles that explain how the candidates are addressing various campaign issues and topics. Encourage students to share their articles with the class and then post them in this display area.
2. Using what they have learned about the candidates from completing the candidate profile, have students design a campaign item for a particular candidate. This could be a button; bumper sticker; print, radio, television or Internet ad; billboard or pamphlet. Have students share their campaign items and then post them near the candidate profile projects.

About the author: Lisa Prososki is an independent educational consultant and instructional design specialist. She taught middle school and high school social studies, English, and technology courses for twelve years. This lesson has been adapted to include materials on Election 2016.