



CULMINATING ACTIVITY: CANDIDATES' NIGHT

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students organize a Candidates' Night at their high school prior to an election.

MATERIALS

Access to an auditorium or large room;
additional resources as needed

GET READY

- ✓ Identify the different persons/groups required for this event.
- ✓ Talk to your principal or vice principal to secure a large room/auditorium for this activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Begin planning the Candidates' Night several months in advance of the event. For a November election, planning should begin soon after school starts in the fall. One option is to design the Candidates' Night around issues of concern to youth.
- ✓ Have your students contact all of the local candidates to see if they can attend the event. A successful Candidates' Night should have most of the local candidates in attendance. It is also possible that some state-level candidates would be willing to come. Make sure that candidates know you will be inviting parents, neighbors, and other adult community members to attend the event; this will likely increase their interest in participating.
- ✓ A student planning committee (or one class) should develop a general plan for the event. For example, will candidates take turns speaking from a podium in the auditorium or will they be assigned to different classrooms at varied

times? The planning committee can decide which of the following work groups are needed to prepare Candidates' Night:

- ✓ Publicity – gets the word out to community members about the event. This could be a large committee to handle designing flyers, posters, news articles, public service announcements and so forth as well as distributing flyers or putting up posters around the community.
- ✓ Candidates' liaison – keeps in touch with each candidate to ensure their participation, obtain campaign literature for information tables, and fulfills any requests the candidates may have for the event.
- ✓ Facilities – makes sure there are microphones, chairs, etc. in the appropriate locations.
- ✓ Information tables – collects written information and sets up staffing for a table to distribute campaign literature for all the candidates (including those who could not attend in person).
- ✓ Voter registration – gathers the appropriate forms and information and sets up staffing for a table to register voters.
- ✓ Program – designs and prints a program to be handed out to those who attend as they enter the school. Includes a map of the school if candidates are going to be located in different classrooms.
- ✓ Refreshments – provides simple refreshments (e.g. cookies and cider) for those in attendance.
- ✓ Follow-up – writes thank you letters to the candidates after the Candidates' Night.



CULMINATING ACTIVITY: CANDIDATES' NIGHT (continued)

- ✓ Consider inviting parents and other community partners to assist with this event through one or more of the work groups.
- ✓ At the Candidates' Night, students should make sure that all tables are staffed, that some students are assigned to be greeters/program distributors, and that each candidate has a student assistant to help with any last minute needs.
- ✓ Students should develop and distribute a short evaluation form for those in attendance to complete before they leave the Candidates' Night. (Provide examples or instructions for students on how to design an effective evaluation.) This feedback should be helpful for planning similar events in the future.
- ✓ Following Candidates' Night — now that the students are fully informed on the candidates and issues — have your students participate in your local Kids Voting USA election. If you are not sure who your contact person is for your class's participation in the election (whether a grade-level chair, school principal, etc.) visit our Web site at www.kidsvotingusa.org and click on "Affiliate Network." It will give you the contact information for your local Kids Voting USA affiliate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *How do you think Candidates' Night went?*
- ★ *What were some of the night's successes?*
- ★ *What would you do differently next time?*
- ★ *Do you think the event was a success for the candidates?*
- ★ *What kind of feedback have you received? Anything positive? Any constructive criticism?*

MORE!

Have your students write articles about the event for the school newspaper or local newspapers.