

Democracy Central

A Teachers Guide To California's Statewide Elections



“26th Amendment: The right to vote at the age of 18. When a person turns 18 he/she is an adult, so they should have a voice in choosing the President.” - Melody Kahkedjian

Debra Bowen
Secretary of State

MYVOTE
STUDENT MOCK ELECTION

Jack O'Connell
Superintendent of Public Instruction

www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection.htm

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This is a publication of the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a collaboration of Constitutional Rights Foundation, Center for Civic Education, and the Alliance for Representative Democracy.

Educating for Democracy

California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools



Constitutional Rights Foundation
601 S. Kingsley Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90005
www.crf-usa.org

Todd Clark
Executive Director

Marshall Croddy
Director of Programs

Keri Doggett
Senior Program Director

Bill Hayes
Senior Editor

David De La Torre
Copy Editing

Introduction

This collection of lesson plans and classroom activities was assembled for the 2008 MyVote California Student Mock Election, a youth civic engagement project sponsored by California Secretary of State Debra Bowen and then-Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell to help students discover the importance of elections and the power of their vote in our democracy. For the 2010 Student Mock Election, the editors updated some of these lessons, as needed, and created a Volume II — 2010 volume, with more ways to help teachers stir their students' interest in voting. We invite you to explore both volumes, as well as “New In 2012!” which features lessons and activities especially geared to this year's presidential election.

The [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#), on behalf of the [California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools](#), selected and created material that is in line with California's 8th, 11th and 12th-grade History-Social Science standards. Students in 9th and 10th grade would also benefit from the many opportunities here to develop their critical thinking and civic participation skills.

The lessons are also aligned with the [Civic Mission of Schools Proven Practices](#). Please note that in the lessons, the term “promising approaches” is used, but in 2011, a new CMS report was issued confirming the practices as proven by research.

These lesson plans are filled with ideas for stirring lively classroom discussion about what it means to take part in a democracy, and for promoting student interest in learning about the candidates and ballot measures at a time when the campaign season is in full swing. They encourage teachers to use interactive approaches, including guided discussion, role-play and simulation, and service learning. While they were chosen to help teachers prepare their students to vote in the MyVote California Student Mock Election, we hope you find them useful during non-election years as well.

For young people, taking part in a mock election at school can be the first step toward becoming a lifelong voter. We encourage you to participate in the [MyVote California Student Mock Election](#), and help your students find out how to gain further firsthand experience with elections while serving their community as a [High School Poll Worker](#).

Using the Curriculum Materials

We know how busy your classrooms are and that you have a lot of content to cover with your students this year. The lessons in this collection were selected with your California History-Social Science standards in mind and are organized by topic. We invite you to **pick and choose** from the menu to best meet your students' needs.

I. Democracy

What is a Democracy?

What the students do: Read about the role of citizens and the function of elections in a democratic society and conduct an interview about voting.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 12.2.4, 12.3.4, 12.6.4

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2

Thanks to: [National Student/Parent Mock Election](#)

Road to Democracy

What the students do: Small groups determine the most important elements of democracy and create a graphic representation of those they think are thriving and those they think are challenges in our country.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 11.1.1; 12.1.2, 12.1.5, 12.2.4

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2

Thanks to: [Street Law, Inc.](#)

Proposals for a More Democratic Country

What the students do: Small groups analyze hypothetical proposals for making America more democratic and role-play a presidential commission evaluating the Electoral College system.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 12.4, 12.6

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2, 6

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

II. The Voters

Voting Rights in America: Past and Present

What the students do: Read about the history of voting rights and role-play a committee deciding to support or oppose modern voting restrictions.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 11.10.6, 11.10.7; 12.6.4, 12.6.6

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2, 6

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

Get the Youth Vote!

What the students do: Take the roles of hypothetical candidates and their staff members and create a strategy to attract young voters. Students will use recent research findings to guide their work.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 12.2.4, 12.6.6

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2, 6 and potentially 3

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

Voter Participation: Who's Voting

What the students do: Examine census data from the 2008 election and evaluate strategies for increasing voter turnout. Create a public service announcement to encourage civic participation.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 12.6.6

CMS Proven Practices: 1, 2, 3

Thanks to: [University of Virginia Center for Politics: Youth Leadership Initiative](#)

III. Candidates, Parties, and Ballot Measures

How to Judge a Candidate

What the students do: Use a framework to learn about and evaluate candidates.

CA History-Social Science Standards: 12.2.4

CMS Proven Practices: 2

Thanks to: [The League of Women Voters of the Cincinnati Area](#) and the [The League of Women Voters Education Fund](#)

Parties, Planks, and Platforms

What the students do: Read about the role of political parties and role-play a committee drafting a party's platform.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.6.1

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 1, 2, 6

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

Deliberating in a Democracy

What the students do: Explore at least one current ballot measure and participate in a structured discussion to analyze the proposed measure and reach their own conclusions.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 11.11; 12.2.4, 12.6.4, 12.6.5

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 1, 2, 3

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago's](#) international program [Deliberating in a Democracy](#)

IV. Ways to Participate

And I Quote...

What students do: Select quotes about civic participation they find meaningful and create a "public service announcement" on the importance of civic participation.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.3.1, 12.3.2, 12.10

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 1, 2, 3

Thanks to: [California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools](#)

Civic Participation and Responsibility

What the students do: Read about and discuss responsible citizenship and prioritize civic participation activities.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.2.3, 12.2.4, 12.2.5 12.3.2

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 1, 2, and potentially 3

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

Get Involved!

What students do: Create a plan of action for participating in an election.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.2.4, 12.6.4

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 2, 3

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

V. The Media

Campaign Advertising

What the students do: Learn about and find examples of different advertising strategies used in political ads and then create their own political ad for the candidate or ballot measure of their choosing.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.6.3

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 2 and possibly 3, 4 if students share ads with candidates/organizations

Thanks to: [University of Virginia Center for Politics: Youth Leadership Initiative](#)

How to Watch a Debate

What the students do: Prepare for and watch a political debate. Use a variety of criteria to “rate the debate” and participate in follow-up discussion and activities.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.6

[CMS Proven Practices:](#) 1, 2, and potentially 3, 4, 5

Thanks to: [The League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund](#) and [The League of Women Voters Cincinnati Area](#)

Additional Resource: [Commission on Presidential Debates](#)

Press Conference

What the students do: Take the roles of candidates and their staff members or reporters for different media outlets and conduct a simulated press conference. Members of the media will endorse a candidate, candidates and staff members will create their last ad before the hypothetical election.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.6.3

[CMS Promising Approaches:](#) 2, 6

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

VI. Getting Informed

Searching and Surfing for Facts

What the students do: Research, participate in “scavenger hunts,” and create products using information they have found to educate others about topics related to voting and elections.

[CA History-Social Science Standards:](#) 12.6.4

[CMS Promising Approaches:](#) 1, 2 and potential parent involvement

Thanks to: [Constitutional Rights Foundation](#)

VII. Links to Additional Resources

Many organizations, both local and national, have excellent lessons and special activities related to elections that support high quality civic education. We have included all of the organizations that contributed lessons for this curriculum resource, and more:

Lessons and Curricula

California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools: <http://www.cms-ca.org>

Center for Civic Education: <http://www.civiced.org/>

Constitutional Rights Foundation: <http://www.crf-usa.org>
League of Women Voters Cincinnati Area: <http://www.lwvcincinnati.org/>
National Conference of State Legislators: <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/backtoschool/back-to-school-your-ideas-count-lesson-plans.aspx>
National Student/Parent Mock Elections: <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/>
New Jersey League of Women Voters: <http://www.lwvnj.org/>
Street Law, Inc.: <http://www.streetlaw.org/>
University of Virginia's Youth Leadership Initiative: <http://208.81.226.245/learning-programs/lesson-plans/>
Vermont Secretary of State:
 High School: <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/kids/vtvotes/912menu.shtml>
 Middle School: <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/kids/vtvotes/57menu.shtml>
 Elementary: <http://www.sec.state.vt.us/kids/vtvotes/k4menu.shtml>

Special Programs to Engage Youth in Elections

California Secretary of State's Programs for Students
Mock Elections: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection.htm>
Student Poll Workers: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/pollworker.htm>
Commission on Presidential Debates: hosting your own DebateWatch:
<http://www.debates.org/pages/dwoverview.html>
National Student/Parent Mock Elections: <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/>
Youth Leadership Initiative, University of Virginia Center for Politics:
<http://208.81.226.245/>

Becoming an Informed Voter: Send Your Students Surfing

California Secretary of State: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/>
Smart Voter by the League of Women Voters: <http://www.smartvoter.org/>
Project Vote Smart: <http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>
Easy Voter Guide: <http://www.easyvoterguide.org>
Rock the Vote: <http://www.rockthevote.com/home.php>
Mobilize.com: <http://mobilize.org/index.php?>
Library of Congress: <http://learning.loc.gov/learn/features/election/home.html>

VIII. Standards

The lessons address the following California History-Social Science content standards for the 11th and 12th grades:

11.5 Students analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural developments of the 1920s. 4. Analyze the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment and the changing role of women in society.

11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights. 1. Analyze the passage and effects of civil rights and voting rights legislation (e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act of 1965) and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, with an emphasis on equality of access to education and to the political process. 2. Analyze the

women's rights movement from the era of Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the movement launched in the 1960s, including differing perspectives on the roles of women.

12.2 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured. 4. Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service.

12.3 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are (i.e., the autonomous sphere of voluntary personal, social, and economic relations that are not part of government), their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society. 1. Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes. 2. Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections. 3. Discuss the historical role of religion and religious diversity. 4. Compare the relationship of government and civil society in constitutional democracies to the relationship of government and civil society in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

12.6 Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices. 1. Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties, noting those occasional periods in which there was only one major party or were more than two major parties. 2. Discuss the history of the nomination process for presidential candidates and the increasing importance of primaries in general elections. 3. Evaluate the roles of polls, campaign advertising, and the controversies over campaign funding. 4. Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, running for political office). 5. Discuss the features of direct democracy in numerous states (e.g., the process of referendums, recall elections). 6. Analyze trends in voter turnout; the causes and effects of reapportionment and redistricting, with special attention to spatial districting and the rights of minorities; and the function of the Electoral College.

12.10 Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.