

CAST YOUR BALLOTS!

Learning Objectives: The students will

1. Analyze the importance of citizens participating in the political process.
2. Utilize problem-solving and decision-making skills to simulate the organization and functions of political parties.
3. Work cooperatively with classmates in order to achieve a common goal.
4. Exercise their right to vote.

TEKS: SS K.10C, K.16, 1.13C, 1.18, 2.12B, 2.18, 3.10C, 3.17A,B
SS 3.16E, 3.17A,B; 4.22B, 4.23A-D; 5.19A,B, 5.25B, 5.26A-D

Materials: A set of People Signs (selected pictures of people from “I was the first. VOTE for ME!” website), tape, copy of the Political Party Instructions, 5 pieces of 12” X 18” drawing paper for each group, markers, construction paper, blank ballots (may be printed from website)

Vocabulary: candidate, political party, slogan, symbol, third party

Teaching Strategy:

Note: This strategy may be used to involve students in a simulation of the political process prior to voting for the person of their choice on the website.

1. After studying selected people from the “I was the first. VOTE for ME!” website, the teacher should post the People Signs on the walls of the classroom.
2. To introduce the lesson, tell students that there are several pictures of people they have studied posted around the classroom. Remind students that a imaginary school is to be named after one of these people. It is going to be their job to decide which person to choose.
3. After reviewing some of the characteristics and contributions of each person, have children stand by the sign of the person they think is the best choice.
4. Explain to students that just as they don’t agree on which person is the best choice, our early leaders didn’t agree on various issues either. Because they had different opinions, they formed political parties. A political party is a group of people who have the same points of view (opinions). The political party supports candidates (running for positions at the local, state, or national level) who have the same viewpoints as the party.

5. Inform students that they are going to form a political party with the students in their person group. (If one or two students are in a group by themselves, the teacher may want them to join another group. If a group is very large, the teacher may divide the large group into two smaller groups.)
6. Display an overhead transparency of the Political Party Instructions. Explain to students that their group should create individual posters to show the following information:
 - The name for your political party. (The name should be related to your person.)
 - The symbol of your political party.
 - A campaign slogan, phrase, or saying that expresses a belief that your political party has about your person.
 - A list of 3-5 reasons or arguments concerning why the school should be named for your party's person.
 - Optional: A political button, a yard sign, the internet web address of your political party, or a bumper sticker.
7. Give each group 5 pieces of 12" x 18" drawing paper and some markers. Have students brainstorm ideas for the name of their political party, symbol, slogan, and list of reasons why their person is the best choice. Tell students that their posters will be presented to the class and then allow sufficient time for completion of the assignment.
8. Before each political party makes their presentation, have students in each group decide who will present each poster. (Everyone in the group must participate.) The order of the presentation should be as follows: (1) party name, (2) symbol, (3) slogan, (4) list of arguments, and (5) optional information.
9. The teacher should advise students to listen carefully to each political party because after the presentations students will be asked to vote for the best person. Point out that students may vote for the person of any political party, regardless of whether they were a member of that political party or not.
10. When presentations are completed, give each student a ballot and have him/her vote for the person that they think would be the best choice.
11. The teacher should collect the ballots and record the results on the board or overhead. A vote can then be cast on the website.

12. Draw attention to the two parties that received the most votes and relate to students that throughout the history of our country, there have been two main parties. Ask students to name the two political parties. (Democratic Party and Republican Party)
13. Debrief the simulation by having student respond to any of the following questions:
- Do you think only having 2 main political parties is good or bad?
 - Since candidates of minor or third parties rarely are elected, why do you think people still support them?
 - Is it important for citizens to participate in the political party of their choice? Why or why not?
 - What did you learn about political parties from participating in this activity?
 - What other campaign items do political parties use?
 - Do you think political yard signs, buttons, and/or bumper stickers influence how people vote? Why or Why not?
 - What are ways that citizens can help the candidate of their choice get elected?
 - What is it important for people to vote on issues that concern them?
 - Should citizens be required to vote in elections? Why or why not?

Extension for Gifted/Talented: Have students write the alphabet down the left hand margin of their paper. Instruct students to write words or phrases beginning with each letter of the alphabet to describe ways citizens can participate in the political process. This same information can be assembled into a book entitled: "Participating in the Political Process: A to Z"

Political Party Instructions

Create individual posters to show the following information:

- The name for your political party (The name should be related to your person.)
- The symbol of your political party.
- A campaign slogan, phrase, or saying that expresses a belief that your political party has about your person.
- A list of 3-5 reasons or arguments concerning why your party's person is the best choice.

Optional: A political button, a yard sign, the internet web address of your political party, or a bumper sticker.