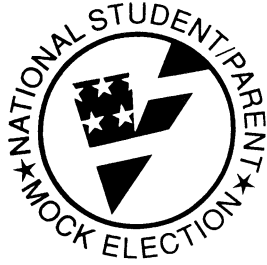


SECTION 2:

Coordinator Possibilities



Strategies for successful Mock Elections are as numerous as the individuals and groups contributing to statewide projects. Thus, the national headquarters of the Mock Election allows state coordinators as much freedom and flexibility as they need to design the strategies that are successful for them.

Though we encourage creative freedom, there is a set of principles that govern the National Student/Parent Mock Election. They are designed to protect the educational value and integrity of the project. Please adhere to them as you implement your state's project.

Guiding Principles of the National Student/Parent Mock Election

- No student or parent may be charged to participate.
- There may be no age limits on enrollments.
- No one may be denied the opportunity to vote.
- Mock Election enrollment must be accepted up to 2 days prior to Mock Election Day, but a state coordinator can establish a cutoff date after which materials are no longer guaranteed.
- All political parties must be included on the ballot.
- Participants **MUST** cast votes for all offices on the national Mock Election ballot, the president (in a presidential election year), members of Congress and governors (where there is a race) *AND* the national issues designated for the Mock Election. State coordinators are free to add local candidates or issues, but may not substitute them for national and state candidates and issues.
- Each state's Mock Election must occur on or prior to, national Mock Election Day, October 30, 2014.
- The state election headquarters, if there is one, must be open to the media and other legitimate observers.

The project is to be used strictly for educational purposes and *never* for political or predictive purposes.

A. Introduction

The National Student/Parent Mock Election, a full-fledged mock election for American students and parents, takes place worldwide: in all 50 states and internationally, wherever Americans reside. On national Mock Election Night, October 30, 2014, the efforts of students, parents, coordinators, teachers and supporters will come to fruition and the national Mock Election headquarters will tabulate all Mock Election votes from each state, Washington, D.C., and overseas to announce the results.

Without state coordinators, the national Mock Election could not take place. We have designed this handbook as a resource to guide you and give you insights into the role of state coordinator. As state coordinator, your task, in a nutshell, is to get the word out and the votes in. This specifically entails the following (described in greater detail throughout this handbook):

- maintaining constant communication with the national organization regarding your progress
- throughout the project,
- establishing a statewide network and steering committee, staffing your state's Mock Election,
- coordinating the efforts of communities across the state,
- involving the media from the beginning of your project,
- distributing ballots, award applications and evaluations, (available on our website, nationalmockelection.org)
- planning Mock Election Night (securing facilities, distributing ballots, collecting local votes and calling, faxing, or e-mailing your results to the national election headquarters on Mock Election Night).
- following through after Mock Election Night (thank-you letters).

You will discover a plethora of potential responsibilities, some of which are described in this handbook, and others that may not be. The choices are yours. There is no right or wrong way to conduct a Mock Election. The best way is the way that works for you. Years of experience with the Mock Election have convinced us that giving creative people freedom is the way to make wonderful things happen. Take whatever ideas and suggestions are helpful in this handbook and ignore the rest. We are here as a resource for you and are always open to your ideas and suggestions. Do not hesitate to let us know how it's going or to ask for help. We will share as much as possible with you as the project grows and as we all watch, with delight, as young lives change.

B. Communicating with the National Organization

1. E-mails

To help everyone keep their Mock Election momentum, the national organization will send e-mails regularly to state coordinators. The e-mails will offer ideas, suggestions, and samples of what others are doing or have done and checklists to help you organize your priorities. They will help you understand the Mock Election process, informing you about everything from developments in national funding to what stage of your Mock Election planning you should be in, to how you can further involve newspapers, educational organizations, public officials, etc. Please feel free to submit to the national organization experiences, ideas and suggestions you would like to share with your counterparts in other states.

2. Coordinator's Report Form

The e-mails will sometimes contain a coordinator's report form with a list of planning items for you to check off. Your continued progress is critical to the success of your state's Mock Election as well as the success of the Mock Election at the national level. Your first responsibility is to keep us informed of your progress. Complete this form in as much detail as possible and return to the national organization **as soon as possible**. Feel free to incorporate additional information about your project; the more we know about your trials and tribulations, as well as about your successes and dreams, the more helpful we can be to you.

C. Establishing a Statewide Network and Steering Committee

1. Creating a Statewide Network

The responsibilities of a state coordinator are extensive and varied; you are going to need help with almost every aspect of this project, from finding local coordinators to mailing Mock Election materials to printing and distributing ballots to securing state Mock Election Night facilities. Creating a network of resources to support your plans and endeavors will be critical to your success. This network will not only help you perform the more mundane administrative duties of state coordinator but it can also offer you — and help you achieve — innovations that will augment the overall diversity, excitement and success of your Mock Election.

2. Developing a Steering Committee

From your statewide network, we suggest you appoint a steering committee that will collectively share the responsibilities of coordinating your state's Mock Election. If each committee member contributes something constructive, your job will be much easier.

Your committee should include representatives from a variety of disciplines (government, business, print and broadcast media, civic organizations, the public relations and advertising community, education, etc.), and should be reliable and goal-oriented. Be sure to enlist people who are responsible, dependable, accountable, organized and not over-committed — every member of the steering committee must be committed to the success of the project and must be willing to follow through on his or her commitments. When you recruit the steering committee, remember that you want those with get-up-and-go.

Once your committee is established, rely heavily on it. State coordinators who do it alone are far less successful. So, take advantage of your network and the resources you are establishing.

3. Organizing a Statewide Meeting

Hosting an initial statewide meeting is the first step in establishing a cooperative (and fruitful) network. You want to reach as many people statewide as possible — the greater the number of people initially involved, the greater the number of potential coordinators, sponsors and/or contributors. Make a checklist and invite everyone who may have even a slight interest in the National Student/Parent Mock Election. If someone you invite cannot help you, he or she may know someone who can.

Remember that every state is different — in one state the governor may be the catalyst, in another it may be the secretary of state or a legislator, a TV station or radio station, the state superintendent/commissioner of education/public instruction, the League of Women Voters or the Parent-Teacher Association. Be sure that your invitation list includes representatives from the local chapters of the cooperating organizations of the National Student/Parent Mock Election as well as any and every other possibility you can conjure: educational, civic, religious and business organizations, as well as public officials. Consider using contact sheets with names, addresses and phone numbers of people you

want to invite. These can be used later as a quick reference for names, numbers, etc. Remember that your networking efforts culminate at the state election headquarters on Mock Election night. The more contacts you have established and utilized, the more diverse and exciting your state's election headquarters and Mock Election Night will be.

4. "Selling" the Mock Election at Your Statewide Meeting

Once your people have gathered, this is your opportunity to introduce and "sell" the National Student/Parent Mock Election. Emphasize the reasons for and the benefits of being associated with the National Student/Parent Mock Election. For example:

- communities need to harness young people's energy and funnel it away from destructive activities into constructive events,
- today's youth needs role models and empowerment,
- association with the project (funding, organizing, contributing to, promoting, etc.) provides tremendous publicity for sponsors and participants (stress the high-profile nature and national scope of the project),
- association with the project provides instant access to and acceptance by, an already established network of educators, public officials and civic leaders, etc.

5. How Volunteers Can Participate

Outline exactly what you need to make your Mock Election sparkle (local coordinators, media contacts, staffing, funding, facilities for the state's Mock Election headquarters, etc.) and ask for the help in making this project happen. (See Appendix 5 for a list of initial Mock Election needs.)

For those attending who cannot participate in the steering committee, ask them to support the project in another way:

As an honorary chairperson or co-coordinator. Many public officials and community leaders support the Mock Election by taking a lead role in their states' projects.

As a spokesperson or active supporter. Government officials can help you get a jump-start on the project by proclaiming National Student/Parent Mock Election Day, writing letters to superintendents and principals across the state (See Appendix 7 for sample Mock Election Day proclamations and letters to superintendents and principals), speaking to the media or sending out press releases. Refer to the highly effective letters and memos written by governors, members of Congress, secretaries of state and others in Appendix 8. High profile spokespersons (business leaders, community activists) can also endorse the project in meetings with school groups, press, civic groups, legislators and others, and encourage them to participate, provide in-kind contributions or help organize this voter-education effort.

In the past, both chairs of the two national parties have written letters to all members of Congress, encouraging them to ask superintendents and principals in their states to ensure that their school districts participate in the Mock Election. (See Appendix 9.) Following up on these kinds of letters and requests with the appropriate people is critical. Once the Democratic National Committee and the Republican National Committee letters have been mailed, you need to contact your congressional delegation, your governor and secretary of state to make sure that they respond to the chairs' requests and send out their own letters of encouragement to principals and superintendents.

- **By contributing funds or in-kind donations.** Local political parties can contribute funds or distribute endorsement letters (co-signed by both state party chairpersons). Civic, educational and business groups can include information about your state's Mock Election in their own mailings. Local businesses can donate paper, duplicating facilities and postage for Mock Election mailings or computers to tabulate votes on your state's Mock Election Night.
- **As a host.** Government, business or educational groups might open the doors of their facilities to host a series of debates, a speech or even your state's Mock Election headquarters (perhaps the governor would offer the state Capitol).
- **As a supplier/distributor of ballots.** All Mock Election participants vote on candidates and issues. Issues ballots are provided in the Teacher's Guide, but candidate ballots differ for each state and are distributed by each state coordinator to schools that do not have access to the Web. (See Appendix 18 for examples of candidate and issue ballots.) Secretaries of state and state election commissioners may be invaluable allies and/or resources here. (Former Mississippi Secretary of State Molpus sponsored a voter registration drive by sending voter registration forms, as well as ballots, home with Mock Election participants. We hope others will adopt this idea.)
- **As a source of contacts.** Government officials and business leaders may have contacts and access to networks you may not have reached, and can introduce you to individuals and/or organizations with particularly keen interests in democracy, politics, voter education and youth mobilization.

[N.B: Another word of caution: Be sure any discussions regarding the Mock Election, particularly those with public officials, are nonpartisan.]

6. Following Up With Initial Contacts

Keep track of the people who attend, and especially those who offer their help, and thank them for their time and effort. Mail a letter with a wish list to the invitees who did not attend. Follow your letters up with phone calls or e-mails. (We have discovered that a reply form with a self-addressed envelope sent with your letter works wonders. However, follow-up phone calls and e-mails usually produce greater results than blind letters.) Remember that each contact is a potential resource for the 2014 Mock Election.

D. Staffing Your State's Mock Election

1. Where to Recruit Help

If you are comfortable recruiting help from many different sources, your staff will come together quickly. If you are less experienced, gathering a staff may take longer. Draft help from your statewide network (in your initial meeting). Contact local organizations (student councils, religious organizations, 4-H groups, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), PTA chapters, Junior Leagues) to provide extra help. Perhaps local college/university students with political science or education majors can be recruited to serve as interns for extra course credit. (Co-coordinating your state's Mock Election could be a great thesis project for a college/university student.) You can also contact the local chapters of our national cooperating organizations (see the full list on our Web site at: www.nationalmockelection.com), local volunteer centers, retired teachers, principals, superintendents and parents for additional help. You will discover many people are only waiting to be asked.

2. Staff Considerations

Concerning your staffing needs, consider the potential in developing a staff composed of coordinators for: the media, selecting a site for and planning state Mock Election headquarters, community outreach, business outreach, government outreach, fundraising and recruiting local coordinators. Don't forget mail clerks.

E. Funding Your State's Mock Election

1. Mock Election Costs

One of our most commonly asked questions is, "How much does it cost to run a Mock Election?" The best answer to that question is, "How much did it cost Tom Sawyer to whitewash the fence?" It is extremely difficult to suggest a budgetary range for a Mock Election because the cost is often directly proportional to the funds and help available. Some Mock Elections are highly successful with only a few hundred dollars; other Mock Elections utilize \$20,000. The amount of your budget will depend on the time you devote to funding and your skill in networking and leveraging off a well-established national resource. Your effort can mean the difference between no budget, a \$1,000 budget and a \$10,000 budget.

2. In-kind Contributions

In-kind contributions go a long way (e.g., phone lines for local election headquarters donated by the local phone company), and, in some cases, meet almost all the needs of some states' Mock Elections. Ask local businesspeople or organizations to donate paper, perhaps one of your state's education or business associations will enclose a Mock Election mailing with one of their own, etc. If you need a list of your state's chapters of our national cooperating organizations, please let us know. (For other Mock Election needs, see Appendix 5.)

F. Getting the Word Out

1. Primary Objectives

Make getting the word out and involving schools your primary objectives. Include them as early in the project as possible so that they can develop and incorporate Mock Election activities into their daily curricula.

2. Establishing a Network of Local Coordinators

As you will need help in spreading the word, creating events and activities and administering the Mock Election at the local level, you should establish a statewide network of local Mock Election coordinators in every school or school district. To help attract local coordinators, consider distributing brochures or flyers to notify all schools in your state/district of the Mock Election and need for local coordinators. Create a colorful brochure describing the Mock Election project and distribute it to all principals. It can be as simple as a single 8 1/2 x 11 flier folded in three parts with a return coupon on one panel. Potential coordinators and schools need something in their hands that allows them to get additional information about and enroll in the Mock Election. It will be far more effective if it goes out in the spring and does not become a “too little and too late” effort. Perhaps the local chapters of the national principals’ associations would let you include the brochure in one of their mailings free of charge. Try other professional groups too.

Leave no stone unturned. Blanket local press offices with press releases. (See Appendix 11 for sample press releases.) Use your statewide network to uncover potential local coordinators. Enlist the help of the cooperating organizations, principals’ associations, teachers’ associations, Parent Teacher Association, local 4-H groups, local student councils, local government leaders, business people and others.

3. Who Can Participate in a Mock Election?

Be sure to extend your invitation to participate to all students, teachers, parents — and grandparents as well — in the state. (We include family members because involving parents in school activities makes a substantial difference in the way children learn and interact with their parents.) Do not discourage anyone based on his or her age. Research shows that voting attitudes are established as early as 7, so even if the vote is between the candidate for chocolate chip cookies vs. the candidate for peanut butter cookies, be sure your state project welcomes even the very youngest. You will discover that children are surprisingly apt — elementary school children hosted our 1990 national election headquarters in Washington, D.C.

G. Contacting the Media

1. Media Outreach

Radio and TV stations are your greatest resource in getting the word out. In contacting state and local news media, you are seeking far more than news coverage, you want a working partner in establishing the project. Take advantage of any public service announcements available on state or local radio and TV stations, and be sure your state/district newspapers are carrying articles on the Mock Election and voter education materials *well in advance of the event*. Remember: outreach first, event coverage second. (Note: be sure to forward media coverage of your Mock Election project to us.)

2. How To Involve the Media

In addition to promoting Mock Election events through news reports and articles, TV and radio stations and newspapers can participate in other ways, by using public service announcements to encourage parents and other adults to take part in this voter education project, acting as a local coordinator, hosting state or local election headquarters, providing Mock Election curriculum materials and ballots, sponsoring and broadcasting high school debates about the candidates. (See Appendix 12 for additional suggestions.)

3. Newspapers-in-Education Associations

Newspaper-in-Education representatives are responsible for the classroom use of newspapers and will also be invaluable in promoting your Mock Election project. Contact your state or local NIE representatives now, before they get involved in other projects. (If you need a list of NIE coordinators in your state, contact us.) Note that Newspapers in Education staff persons are in the *marketing*, not the editorial, division of the papers. Please send press releases to reporters, not to NIE coordinators.

Important

*All media representatives must understand that the Mock Election is **not an election prediction** and cannot be used as one. It is critical that all coordinators forward the Media Letter and Fact Sheet (see Appendix 13) to members of their state and local media to educate them about the purpose of the National Student/Parent Mock Election.*

H. Promoting the Mock Election

1. *Mock Election Events and Ideas*

As state coordinator, it is your responsibility, with help from your local coordinators, to promote the Mock Election and devise events that win attention statewide. Create energy and momentum around the Mock Election by planning statewide events and helping local coordinators plan and coordinate local events. Do not hesitate to adopt the Star Trek approach and “venture where no man has gone before.” Ideas for Mock Election events are infinite — consider everything from press conferences and debates to special re-enactments. In Memphis, parents and teachers and their spouses dressed up as past presidents and their wives and invited Mock Election participants to a “White House” tea where they registered future voters. Also consider a kick-off press conference with the governor or a senator as a featured speaker, a rally and balloon release on the steps of the Capitol, a parade with marching bands or a political forum with a well-known political analyst. Even we were surprised when 5,000 students and parents in Virginia Beach turned out to hear a well-known political analyst at a Mock Election political forum.

2. *Joint Partnership Events*

The Mock Election is an outstanding opportunity to create unique partnerships and host joint events. For example, older citizens often vote down school bonds because, having no school-age children, they have no interest in schools. Recognize senior citizens who are passing the legacy of their democracy on to younger generations. In Miami, Florida, an “Adopt A Grandparent” breakfast, where surrogate grandparents told primary school children about the elections they remembered, was so successful that a TV camera crew that came for “10 minutes” stayed the entire day. You can contact the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) or your local Volunteer Center for suggestions and help with these kinds of events. (See Appendix 14 for other Mock Election events and ideas.)

3. *Importance of “Star Value”*

Be sure to invite as many students, teachers and principals as possible to Mock Election events and to involve all of your new contacts, including political candidates and public officials (of major and minor parties), media, community leaders. Don’t underestimate the importance of “star value” in attracting supporters, TV cameras and reporters. The appearances of well-known public officials and/or community leaders can help make your event an even greater success.

Note: consider devising a “Scheduling Outline” to help you coordinate your statewide efforts (see Appendix 15 for an example).

I. The How To Do It Guide

In 1996, in response to requests from our state coordinators, we developed the How to Do It Guide. This guide offers ideas and suggestions for Mock Election *activities*. The How To Do It Guide will help teachers organize experiential education activities *regardless of which subjects the activities are built around* (e.g., a cable call-in show can deal with any number of subjects). It suggests strategies and events designed to affect attitudes and behavior through the active involvement of parents and students. Research has proven that traditional classroom lessons designed to increase knowledge of “civics” do not affect attitudes and behavior. *Active* involvement is the catalyst for change. This is the message that state coordinators need to share with local coordinators.

Activities in the How To Do It Guide include:

- School forums and local cable call-in shows on the national issues to be voted upon in an “issues forum.”
- Speeches and debates given to students and parents by local candidates or stand-ins for such candidates.
- Quiz team competitions, mock press conferences and speech writing competitions.
- Weekly meetings to follow the course of the campaign.
- School and neighborhood campaigns to increase voter turnout, including suggestions for newsletters, posters, and transportation.

J. The National Standards for Civics and Government

In 1994, under a grant from the Department of Education and the Pew Foundation, the Center for Civic Education drafted the National Standards for Civics and Government. As stated in the standards, “education has a civic mission: to prepare informed, rationale, humane and participating citizens committed to the values and principals of American constitutional democracy.” The standards are voluntary and provide a guideline for what students of various ages and grades should know about civics and government. Specifically the standards recommend that today’s students be able to think critically about political issues, to influence politics and government, etc. Many states developed their state standards around the national standards.

The CORE Standards we developed by Under Secretary Arne Duncan. The relationship between the educational standards and the National Student/Parent Mock Election is obvious: participating in the Mock Election will help schools meet the recommendations of the new standards. The How To Do It Guide will provide you with specific examples of how to use the Mock Election experiential education activities to meet the standards while providing students an engaging venue in which to learn. We have included some sample pages of the standards. You can download a copy of the full standards @ www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/. Note that in 2002 Mock Election curricula were also developed around the standards of *No Child Left Behind*.

K. Planning Mock Election Night

Millions of students (and some their parents) vote in classrooms, schools, community centers, state capitals, even hospital rooms, all across the nation. Their vote totals are reported to their state or national election headquarters. The press flashes the results across the airwaves and the internet.

Preparation begins months or even years ahead of time. States and other areas have volunteer coordinators distributing voting and curriculum guides, etc; and planning for their election headquarters, vote tabulations and all the other elements of an actual election.

Five days before America votes on Election Day, many of the media are represented at National Election Headquarters for the National Student/Parent Mock Election, watching as the results come in from all 50 states and American schools around the world. The voices of millions of young Americans are about to be heard.

The students have studied the candidates and their positions, held issues forums and debates, mock press conferences, cable call-in programs and get-out-the-vote campaigns. Schools have appointed school coordinators while students and parents have decorated their school election headquarters. Some have borrowed voting machines from local election officials, while others are preparing to vote on their school computers and send their votes electronically to their state election headquarters or to National Election Headquarters. Some will be tallying paper ballots and transmitting their results by phone or fax. In many of the classrooms and at many of the state election headquarters, governors, senators, congressmen and candidates are joining the young voters and often parents, too. Tonight is their night.

At National Election Headquarters on Mock Election Day there is a flurry of activity. Who will verify that each state's vote comes in at the appointed time? Who will call urgently if a state is missing? Who will take care of schools that have lost their web-voting ID? Who will enter the thousands of faxes and add the votes to each state's totals? Who will handle the phoned-in votes? How about the help line? How about the overseas schools and the American students all around the world? Are there enough blank ballots to record the votes? The students are voting on national issues as well as on candidates. Is each state's ballot accurate? Can we keep it all straight? Will a state coordinator go to dinner and forget to send in an entire state's vote? The press has been promised national totals by the end of the evening. Can we make it? Who will be handling the press calls? The TV cameras? Suddenly the vast room is quiet. It is time for the votes to start pouring in. Each state has a required reporting time, ready or not. Fifty states must report at five-minute intervals. Will all 50 make it? Will all the overseas schools, too?

Who will be elected the next President of the United States? Which party will win control of the Senate? The House? Who will be elected the next governor? What issues matter most to students across the state? Across the nation?

Miraculously, by the end of the evening all the votes have been counted. They will be recounted the next day for accuracy, but it isn't the numbers that matter. Mock Election Day is the culmination of months of learning the power of participation in our democracy.

"The research is clear – getting young people involved in the local and national political process as they come to citizenship age is a vital aspect of engaging them as empowered participants in the political system. The National Student/Parent Mock Election is an organization that is committed to that goal and has a long history of energizing local connections that facilitate participation."

Professor Anne Hildreth, Dept. of Political Science, State University at Albany, SUNY

L. Distributing Award Applications

1. Role of the State Coordinator

State coordinators are responsible for distributing award applications to all participating schools in their state. The award applications are available on our Web site under the “Tools” button.

National Student/Parent Mock Election awards are given by The National Association of State Boards of Education for outstanding leadership in voter education; the American Association of School Administrators for outstanding leadership in voter education; the National Association of Secondary School Principals/John Herklotz for outstanding contributions to teaching democracy; the National Association of Student Councils/Ruth Hollander for outstanding contributions to democratic participation; and the League of Women Voters for increasing parent and community participation in the Mock Election and/or the actual election.

M. Following Through After Mock Election Day

1. Inaugural Celebrations

As *Education Week* suggests, one of the most effective teaching strategies for bringing students and parents together may be planning a party. The Mock Election Inaugural Balls began in 1992 and have proven themselves to be an ideal way to mark the importance of elections and to captivate and engage younger generations’ interest in the political process. The Mock Election Inaugural Celebrations follow student research and study about the American Presidency and the Rule of Law and reinforce the principles of democracy. The peaceful transition of governments is one of America’s greatest achievements. Like the Inaugural Ball in Washington, D.C., the Mock Election Inaugural Celebrations commemorate a “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” They signify the creation and the transference of America’s democratic tradition from one president to the next, from one generation to the next. The Inaugural Celebrations are alcohol- and drug-free celebrations of democracy, not of victory.

The first Inaugural Celebrations in 1992 were tremendously successful and varied from a Native American powwow in South Dakota to a party for 1,200 military personnel and students in Frankfurt, Germany. We strongly encourage you or your local volunteers to begin planning Inaugural Celebrations within your state. Consider selecting a Mister or Madame President (through a student election, contest for the best Inaugural Address or essay contest). Contact the national office for ideas and suggestions if you need them.

2. Participant Recognition

It is important to thank all participants and give them credit for their contributions to the Mock Election. Send thank-you letters to everyone who contributed to your Mock Election: public officials, individuals, organizations, student councils, the facility that hosted your Mock Election, educators, local business people, etc. Consider presenting certificates of recognition to those who deserve special recognition (students, parents, special benefactors, etc.). Let students help with thank-you letters. It is an important lesson for them.