

2014 Mock Election Award Application

Contact Person: Cari Zawodny Title: Youth Vote Coordinator

Address: 12608 Spring Brook Dr. City: Eagle River

State/Zip: AK 99577 Work Phone:907.223.4077

E-mail Address:anchorageyouthvote@gmail.com

Project Name: Anchorage Youth Vote 2014

Participating Partners: League of Women Voters of Anchorage, Anchorage School District, Spirit of Youth, Kaladi Brothers Coffee Co.

1) Please describe your project (brief project summary.)

Youth Vote is a project by youth, for youth. Every aspect of this program was designed by students. The chief goals of Youth Vote are to engage our peers in the democratic process, instill a life-long dedication to voting, and to inspire future leaders through events that educate and empower.

Classroom Curriculum:

National Student Mock Election curriculum is available to all Anchorage School District Social Studies and Government teachers on-line. Additional information about voting in Alaska, as well as a listing of voting related web resources is sent electronically, along with information about other Youth Vote activities.

Candidate/Issues Forum:

Youth leaders coordinate a youth-run forum prior to the general election. The format, questions and production are youth directed. The debate is broadcast on live television and streams on-line.

Candidate Meet and Greet:

Candidates and their staff are invited to meet one on one with Anchorage students at a local coffee shop. This event is open to the public.

Mock Election:

In November, to coincide with the General Election, Youth Vote coordinates a Mock Election for students in grades 5-12. Students in participating schools have an opportunity to cast their vote for all statewide offices and a student created ballot question. Voting is internet based, and requires the use of a student ID so that only one vote can be cast per student. Results from the Mock Election are transmitted to Election Central for announcement along with the general election returns.

2) Please state the goals of the project, and describe the techniques or strategies you used to meet them. Did you make use of new technology as part of your strategy? If so, how?

The purpose of Youth Vote 2014 is to provide a non-partisan venue for empowering youth to vote and be involved in the democratic process. Youth Vote is dedicated to providing young people, teachers, educators and the community with relevant tools to achieve this mission. Through Youth Vote, The League of Women Voters of Anchorage, the Youth Vote 2014 Planning Team, and Youth Vote partners worked to meet the following goals:

1. Educate youth about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society.
2. Provide opportunities for students to discuss political issues with peers, parents, political candidates and elected officials.
3. Encourage student involvement in the electoral process thus developing a positive life-long voting habit.

Youth Vote 2014 was successful in its mission. This success is due to the efforts of Youth Vote donors and partners like the Anchorage School District; candidates that participated in Youth Vote events; the

League of Women Voters of Anchorage Board members; and especially the group of dedicated students who made up the Youth Vote 2014 Planning Team.

3) Describe the participants in your project at each stage of its implementation. How many people were involved and what were their roles? Were they teachers, students, parents, or others?

The Youth Vote 2014 Planning Team, consisting of 9 students representing 6 Anchorage area middle and high schools, served as the Youth leadership body in planning this year's Youth Vote project. The Planning Team was responsible for planning and coordinating a number of youth led activities including:

- ☐ A televised candidate forum broadcast statewide on KTUU channel 2 prior to the November 2014 general election. The planning team was responsible for inviting candidates, soliciting and selecting from their peers candidate questions of interest to youth, working with KTUU to produce the broadcast and moderating the candidate debate on live television. Over 800 students attended the candidate forum in person. The broadcast reached a statewide audience.
- ☐ Candidate Meet and Greet at Kaladi Brothers Coffee prior to the November 2014 election. The planning team invited candidates and advertised and promoted the youth focused event. Fourteen candidates/campaigns attended and spoke with students in this informal setting.
- ☐ Student Ballot Question. The Planning Team developed a student specific question to place on the Youth Vote 2014 mock election ballot for Anchorage students. Students were encouraged to discuss the merits of the student ballot question so as to become informed voters. Nearly 11,500 students cast ballots in the mock election.
- ☐ Media Outreach. The Youth Vote planning team actively distributed press releases announcing the results of the Youth Vote 2014 mock election at Election Central on election night. As a result, the planning team members gave approximately six radio interviews and received extensive media coverage on Anchorage's NBC affiliate, KTUU.

League of Women Voters of Anchorage and the Youth Vote coordinator, in conjunction with partners:

- raise funds to cover all aspects of the project including:
 - a) electronic distribution of curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school civics/social studies teachers in the Anchorage area
 - b) production of a televised forum for U.S. Senate candidates, Gubernatorial candidates, and/or State ballot issues
 - c) a computer-based school mock election for the General Election, 2014
- facilitate meetings with the Youth Vote Planning Team to set goals and establish working groups
- work with and attend all student meetings/activities as advisor(s)
- provide support to students as they report the results of the mock election

Anchorage School District (Superintendent, Social Studies Coordinator, Principals, Teachers, Students):

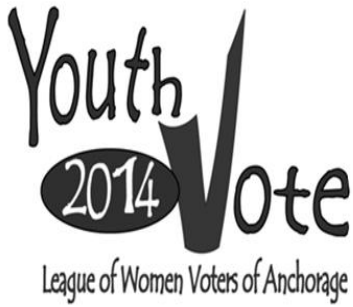
- develop and monitor the electronic mock election system
- provide administrative and faculty liaisons to help distribute information and materials
- provide space for the televised Candidates Forum
- provide transportation for eleventh and twelfth grade students to the Candidates Forum

Partners

From its inception, Youth Vote as benefitted from the support of the Anchorage School District. We are incredibly grateful for the efforts of ASD students, teachers and administrative staff. Youth Vote 2014 had the added benefit of formalizing our relationship with Spirit of Youth. Through SOY's support, Youth Vote will continue to work on the Youth Vote 2014 Student Advisory Ballot Measure in 2015. This is the first time Youth Vote has carried over into a non-election year.

Donors

The following is a copy of the thank you published in the Anchorage Daily News following the election. Youth Vote 2014 was a success thanks to these generous organizations, groups and individuals.



THANK YOU!

The League of Women Voters of Anchorage thanks our donors, friends, and our planning partners who made Youth Vote 2014 a great success. We couldn't have done it without you!

LWVAK Education Fund & LWV of Anchorage



CIRI - Gottstein Family Foundation - TOTE - Anonymous - Lynden Inc.

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Mary Jane Cox
Joan Antonson
Heather Flynn
V Kay Lahdenpera
Carol Comeau
Mary Rosenzweig
Pat Redmond
Beryl Johnson
Arless Sturgulewski

KTUU - West Anchorage High School - Youth Vote Student Leaders - ATMI - UAA Votes - and many wonderful community members!

4) Who was your intended audience or who did you hope the project would impact? How well did you succeed in reaching them? How do you know?

Youth Vote’s intended audience is Anchorage’s young people. Voter participation is a critical responsibility of a functioning democracy, and yet voter participation is low, particularly among young voter demographics. Youth Vote strives to engage youth in the election process by building skills and enthusiasm for life long participation as an engaged and informed electorate. In the short term, youth involved with the Planning Team build personal leadership skills and have multiple opportunities to engage with media outlets. Over the long term, it is our hope that individuals involved with the electoral process from a young age will become engaged citizens into the future. The Youth Vote Planning Team is critical for translating what would otherwise be a dry civics lesson into a project that actively engages their peers. The information provided in outcomes demonstrates Youth Vote’s success in reaching our target audience.

5) Did your project (a) include effective outreach to at-risk students or parents likely to be nonvoters? (b) significantly improve parent involvement in the Mock Election? (c) increase overall participation rates in the Mock Election?

A. Voter apathy, particularly among the youngest voter demographic, is eroding the vibrancy of our democracy. As fewer individuals participate in elections, more and more power is shifted from “the people”; to interest groups with money and power. We all understand that we need to address this problem, and the League of Women Voters is dedicated to preserving the power of the voter. However, a group of well-meaning adults telling young people why they need to vote is not working. Youth Vote takes a different approach. By offering youth the opportunity to take leadership on addressing the voter apathy problem we are facing, peers are listening and participating. When they see their classmates leading a political debate on live television, they pay attention. By creating opportunities for politicians to speak directly with youth on their concerns, the Youth Vote Planning team is letting their friends know that their future is at stake and giving meaningful opportunities to express their concerns. The Youth Vote Planning Team uniquely provides fellow youth awareness and opportunity for involvement in the democratic process. It can only serve to increase youth engagement in civic affairs.

6) What was/were the specific outcome(s) of the project? Did it have measurable impact? What criteria did you use to measure impact or success?

Goals and Outcomes:

1. Educating Youth about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society

Youth Vote Curriculum and Educator’s Resources

Youth Vote achieved this goal in close partnership with the Anchorage School District. Since 2002, Youth Vote has been using curriculum provided by the National Student/Parent Mock Election. In 2012, NSME created a new on-line curriculum for educators to use in their classrooms. The curriculum contains age appropriate

lesson plans developed specifically for NSME that are tied to Core requirements as well as interactive on-line activities for students and teachers. In 2014 this curriculum was again updated by NSPME and vetted by the ASD before it was made available to teachers. Additional information about voting in Alaska, a list of voting related web resources, and information about Youth Vote activities were also sent electronically to all ASD social studies and government teachers in the middle and high school levels as well as to all elementary school teachers. The on-line NSME curriculum and additional resources were sent to private schools in Anchorage and Eagle River. Youth Vote and the Social Studies Coordinator for the ASD were available to answer questions from teachers as they worked to implement this curriculum leading up to the election.

2. Provide opportunities for students to discuss political issues

All Youth Vote activities address this goal, but two of our events – the Youth Vote Candidates Forum and the Candidate Meet and Greet – were developed specifically to provide opportunities to discuss issues concerning young people during an election cycle.

Youth Vote 2014 Candidates Forum

The Youth Vote 2014 Forum took place at 12:00pm on Tuesday, October 14th, at the West High School Auditorium, and was televised live on KTUU Channel 2. Many community members, city and state leaders, and over 800 ASD students from eight high schools, many of voting age, attended the Forum. Youth Vote met its goal to educate, engage and inspire our future leaders through lively Q&A. ASD students submitted over 200 questions to the Youth Vote Planning Team. The planning team took on the serious task of compiling a short list of twelve questions for Alaska’s candidates for US Senate that reflected the concerns of their peers.

Youth Vote 2014 Forum was structured in two parts. First, Youth Vote invited all gubernatorial candidates to submit tape responses to three Alaska focused questions submitted prior to the event. Sean Parnell and Bill Walker both accepted the invitation and their tapes were played after a brief explanation. This multi-media approach to the forum was very successful. Many students and teachers enjoyed the taped remarks and felt that it added an extra level of depth to the project.

The second phase of the Forum was the US Senate Q&A. All candidates who won in their primary races or were nominated by petition were invited to debate. Mark Begich, Ted Gianoutsos, and Mark Fish accepted our invitation. The debate portion was moderated by Youth Vote student leaders, Barae Hirsch and Allison Haynes. All questions were based on the ASD student submissions, and all questions were submitted to the ASD for approval prior to the event.

The Youth Vote 2014 Candidates Forum enjoyed excellent media coverage beyond the live broadcast by KTUU. All major television news outlets in Anchorage picked up the story, and in the days and weeks following the event Youth Vote was sought out for interviews and commentary on the election especially as it pertains to young people.

While the Forum’s main goal was to provide discussion opportunities to local youth, the Forum had national significance as well. As a registered project of the National Student/Parent Mock Election, which is supported by the National League of Women Voters, the National Association of Broadcasters, and many other high profile organizations, the Youth Vote 2014 Candidates Forum was part of a nationwide effort to increase voter education and discussion/debate on issues facing emerging voters.

Kaladi Brothers Candidate Meet and Greet

On October 16th, **Youth Vote** hosted a Candidate Meet and Greet at Kaladi Brothers on Brayton Dr. The event was well attended by youth and candidates for State and National office. Much of the evening was spent in one-to-one or small group discussion between young people, candidates or candidate representatives. Comments from candidates and youth participants indicate that the event was extremely worthwhile and provided valuable insight for young constituents as well as for the candidates. Representatives from Kaladi Brothers stated that this meet and greet was the most successful yet, and they were very pleased with the turn out. Fourteen candidates/campaigns attended the meet and greet including Dan Sullivan as well as staff from Mark Begich’s campaign.

3. Encourage student involvement in the electoral process

All **Youth Vote** activities are designed with all of the project’s goals in mind, but the **Youth Vote** Mock Election is the cornerstone to engaging youth in the electoral process.

Youth Vote 2014 Mock Election

Over 11,000 students across the Anchorage School District participated in the Youth Vote 2014 Mock Election. ASD students in grades 4-12 were given the opportunity to cast their vote for all national and statewide offices as well as two official ballot measures (measure 3: minimum wage and measure 4: mining in Bristol Bay) and one student advisory ballot measure. Voting was internet based, and required the use of a student ID so that only one vote could be cast per student. The ASD worked with Youth Vote Planning Team members to create the ballot as well as the voting procedures.

Youth Vote Planning Team members selected the student advisory ballot measure based on feedback

and discussions with other students. This election's student created measure focused on mental health:

Should a minor who is 13 years or older have access to outpatient mental health, drug or alcohol treatment without the consent of a parent or guardian?

Youth Vote Planning Team members provided pro and con statements for official ballot measures as well as background and research for the student created measure. Additional information was provided as needed to assist teachers as they prepared students to vote. Paper ballots without the student created measure were provided to elementary school teachers to use as an alternative to online voting if teachers felt the student created question was too mature for their younger students. Results from the Mock Election were announced at Election Central along with general election returns. Youth Vote Planning Team members were interviewed by many local news outlets during Election Central coverage.

7) In what way did your project advance the goals of the National Student/Parent Mock Election to (a) increase the belief that voting is important? (b) improve political decisionmaking ability? (c) increase informed involvement on current issues (d) increase the belief that social studies classes are relevant? (e) increase student's discussion of political and election topics with their parents? (f) decrease the sense of powerlessness?

We believe Youth Vote advanced the goals of NSPME in all areas.

A) Through the Educators Guide, the Candidates Forum, the Meet and Greet, and the Mock Election, we demonstrated the value of voting time and time again. High turnout in a non-Presidential election shows that the message was received by youth.

B) Students were given tools to improve decision making in the classroom well before the Mock Election. The Educator's Resource Guide and the pro/con statements prior to voting provided substantial information to help with decision making. Events like the Candidates Forum and the Meet and Greet gave students an opportunity to gather as much information as they needed to help inform their votes.

C) The Candidates Forum, Meet and Greet, and pro/con statements on ballot measures allowed students an avenue for involvement with the issues. Our student created ballot measure is currently providing students with a mechanism for engaging elected officials and community leaders on an issue of great importance to Alaska youth.

D) All of Youth Vote's activity starts in the Social Studies classroom. Teachers help distribute Youth Vote information and are the key contacts for all of our major project elements. We certainly hope that making the Social Studies classroom central to our efforts, these classes are seen as relevant and valuable by students and the community.

E) While we cannot measure an increase in communication between students and parents, we have several firsthand accounts of students engaging their parents in political discussion after the Candidates Forum and the Meet and Greet. Many students attended the Meet and Greet with their parent(s).

F) Youth Vote demonstrated time and time again through the media that youth are not powerless, that even before they are registered voters they have a voice and Youth Vote helps make sure that voice is heard. In Anchorage, the media took a great interest in the youth perspective this election cycle because of Youth Vote's efforts to magnify the youth voice.

8) Is there anything else you believe makes your project an award-winning effort?

In addition to the social problem Youth Vote is intended to address, that being voter apathy, this particular Youth Vote Planning Team is seeking to address a second social problem, that being the age of consent for mental health services in Alaska. Through a very thoughtful process to develop a student specific question for the Youth Vote Mock Election ballot, the Planning Team has now become engaged with this issue of concern to their peers. It is our understanding that as a result of the mock election, the Planning Team will continue their activities specifically on this one topic. The League of Women Voters

of Anchorage is very excited to see where the planning team goes and will support their efforts as they address this issue within the community and perhaps with policy makers.

The following links are a sample of the types of stories involving **Youth Vote**:

<http://www.alaskapublic.org/2014/10/20/with-millions-pumped-into-u-s-senate-race-voters-near-their-limit/>

<http://m.ktuu.com/a-lesson-in-democracy/29613472>

<http://m.ktuu.com/news/asd-students-ask-tough-questions-to-us-senate-candidate-hopefuls/29132828>

The National Association of State Boards of Education Award For Outstanding Leadership in Voter Education In Conjunction with The National Student/Parent Mock Election Presented to Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government University of Central Florida:

The National Association of State Boards of Education Award Application

Applicant Name: Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

Contact Person: Stephen Masyada

Title: Director

Address: 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 406

City: Orlando

State/Zip: Florida, 32826

Work Phone: 407-823-4018

E-mail Address: Stephen.masyada@ucf.edu

Fax Number: 407-823-3637

Project Name: Florida Student Mock Election

Participating Partners: Florida Supervisors of Elections

1. Please describe your project (brief project summary)

Since 2008, the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship has served as the Florida state coordinator for the National Student/Parent Mock Election. Over four election cycles (2008, 2010, 2012, 2014), we have engaged approximately 400,000 K-12 student voters with registrants from 97% of the 67 public school districts in Florida. We have also involved a variety of private, charter and home schools throughout the state. In 2010, we launched the Florida Student Mock Election website, <http://floridastudentmockelection.com>, to manage the state registration and voting process at the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship and to have a site designed to meet the specific needs of Florida's teachers and students.

For the 2014 Mock Election, we partnered with the Florida Supervisors of Elections. This partnership encouraged local Supervisors of Elections to use the aforementioned Florida Student Mock Election site as a teaching tool for classroom visits. The partnership provided our teacher participants with direct access to their local Supervisors, and for many students, this was their first direct exposure to both state and local government. Supervisors were given an opportunity to explain their role in the state and local communities, discuss how elections work, and describe why voting is such an important right and obligation for citizens.

We also redesigned the Florida Student Mock Election website to match the state races on the ballot. The website is designed for teachers and district personnel to register themselves and the number of students that will vote. Unique voter identification numbers are generated once registration is complete and students use these numbers to vote online. The ballots are preloaded with state-wide and congressional races using the school address that is entered upon registration to generate the appropriate congressional district. For the 2014 program, ballots automatically included the races for governor and the U.S. House of Representatives. Teachers had the option to edit their ballot by adding races (such as a local government and student government contests) and deleting races they chose not to have their students vote on. For example, some elementary teachers decided to delete the U.S. House race on their ballot and focus their mock election lessons and activities on the governor's race. The website provides links to resources to assist with classroom instruction. The website also gives teachers the option to enter

paper ballot totals if they choose to have their students vote by paper rather than online. Recruitment for the 2014 program was primarily targeted at teachers and district personnel by Florida Joint Center for Citizenship's staff and Supervisors of Elections and was conducted in a few ways. We followed up with all past registrants by email, conducted face to face professional development programs in districts around the state, presented to the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors and reached out to our state-wide teacher network through our Facebook page and blog, <http://floridacitizens.wordpress.com>.

2. Please state the goals of the project, and describe the techniques or strategies you used to meet them. Did you make use of new technology as part of your strategy? If so, how?

The goals for the 2014 Florida Student Mock Election were to continue spreading awareness of the mock election program, provide professional development to K-12 teachers on voting and elections, support the instruction of state and local government and increase the program's visibility on social media.

To increase awareness of the program, provide professional development and support state and local government instruction, the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship partnered with the Florida Supervisors of Elections. With this partnership, face to face outreach expanded and more professional development programs were offered by both organizations. The focus of these programs was to provide an orientation to the Florida Student Mock Election website (<http://floridastudentmockelection.com>) and to encourage voting on state and local elections.

To increase the program's visibility on social media, the Florida Joint Center for Citizenship staff frequently posted information to the Joint Center Facebook page and encouraged participation on our blog, <http://floridacitizens.wordpress.com>.

3. Describe the participants in your project at each stage of its implementation. How many people were involved and what were their roles? Were they teachers, students, parents, or others?

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship staff developed the Florida Student Mock Election website, conducted professional development throughout the state, presented to the Florida Association of Social Studies Supervisors, served as technical support to answer questions and troubleshoot any issues with registration or voting and coordinated efforts with the Florida Supervisors of Elections to further the program's outreach.

Teachers and district personnel who register to participate on the voting website have the responsibility to hand out the unique voter ids and have their students vote. We encourage teachers to go beyond simply having their students cast a ballot and engage their students in lessons about elections, specific races on the ballot and the importance of voting.

4. Who was your intended audience or who did you hope the project would impact? How well did you succeed in reaching them? How do you know?

Ultimately, we want the mock election to impact students and provide them with voting practice so that they will become active and engaged voters when they turn 18. We also want to impact teachers by providing them with a quality resource to promote voter education. We targeted our recruitment and designed our website around teachers and district personnel so that they have a strong mock voting program to use to engage as many of their students as possible. We succeeded in our outreach for the 2014 program. This is evident by the fact that we had registrants from 49 school districts (73%) and over 26,000 ballots cast during the mock election voting window.

5. Did your project (a) include effective outreach to at-risk students or parents likely to be nonvoters? (b) significantly improve parent involvement in the Mock Election? (c) increase overall participation rates in the Mock Election?

Outreach to students within low-SES/at-risk communities was done through teachers and district social studies leaders using social media, email, and professional development sessions. This effort also engaged the local Supervisors of Elections in the process of illustrating the importance of voting and encouraging students to discuss voting with their parents, and in traditionally low-SES areas of Florida (such as certain Panhandle communities), we saw good participation among schools. Because our audience is primarily students, we cannot determine parent involvement in the Mock Election, but our partnership with Supervisors of Elections did provide students with election resources to share with parents, and we saw a high number of ballots cast, especially considering that it was an off-year election.

6. What was/were the specific outcome(s) of the project? Did it have measurable impact? What criteria did you use to measure impact or success?

We had teachers from 49 school districts (73%) registered to participate and over 26,000 ballots cast during the mock election voting window. We believe that every vote during the mock election represents a student being given an opportunity to practice responsible and engaged citizenship. Our hope is that by providing students with these opportunities every election cycle, they will become active and engaged registered voters. We measure success by creating a voting platform that can be, and is, used in K-12 schools from Pensacola to Miami. By engaging a diversity of districts, we know that regardless of geography or resources, students can have access to a quality voter education program.

7. In what way did your project advance the goals of the National Student/Parent Mock Election to (a) increase the belief that voting is important? (b) improve political decision-making ability? (c) increase informed involvement on current issues (d) increase the belief that social studies classes are relevant? (e) increase student's discussion of political and election topics with their parents? (f) decrease the sense of powerlessness?

Using our social media resources, as well as our connections with teachers, district leaders, and local Supervisors of Elections, the FJCC consistently and strongly emphasized the importance of exercising the right to vote and providing K-12 students the opportunity to practice the process of voting and debating issues. Based on the number of participants that took part in the Mock Election, this message was effective. Improving political decision-making ability, informed involvement on current issues, the discussion of political and election topics with parents, and improving self-efficacy are difficult metrics to measure, as ultimately we cannot see the impact until these students are actually able to vote. However, our model lesson plans and resources connected to the Mock Election, as well as the contributions of the local Supervisors of Elections, provided participants with the opportunity to debate current issues and candidates in order to make an informed decision. Communication with teachers and election supervisors, both during and after the election season, suggests that these debates did occur in a large number of classrooms, and students were highly engaged, especially in regards to the race for governor and on medical marijuana.

We do believe that our effort with the Mock Election illustrated the importance of social studies within the broader curriculum. Our social media posts through our blog,

Facebook, and Twitter, emphasized time and again that the Mock Election effort was a perfect opportunity to engage students with both civics and social studies, and for some schools in the state, this was one of the only real quality social studies that occurred in the classroom.

8. Is there anything else you believe makes your project an award-winning effort?

The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship believes very strongly in the civic mission of schools. The number of participants involved in the Mock Election since 2008 illustrates the impact that our social media and additional outreach efforts have had in encouraging future citizens to practice their right and obligation to vote. Our new partnership with the Florida Supervisors of Elections is one that is not heavily duplicated across the nation, and their use of our Mock Election site illustrated for students again the importance of voting and why elections are so significant.

The League of Women Voters of the United States Award For Increasing Parent And Community Participation In The Mock Election And/Or Actual Election In Conjunction with The National Student/Parent Mock Election Presented to The Oregon League of Women Voters:

2014 Mock Election Award Application

Applicant Name:

The League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund

Contact Person: Paige Lancourt Title:

2014 Oregon Student Mock Election Coordinator

Address: 1330 12th St. SE, Suite 200 City:

Salem

State/Zip: Oregon, 97302 Work Phone:

503-581-5722

E-mail Address: mockelection@voteoregon.org

Project Name: The Oregon Student Mock Election

Participating Partners: The Multnomah Bar Foundation

1) Please describe your project (brief project summary.)

The Oregon Student Mock Election is run by the League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund every two years. The Oregon Student Mock Election is a long-standing, and statewide program aiming to educate young people on government processes, the election system, and the importance of voting. **In 2014, students focused on the importance of mid-term elections, and voted for a number of Oregon elected officials, as well as the seven Oregon state ballot measures.** This past year the League of Women Voters of Oregon was able to design and update the 2014 teacher's curriculum, construct new PowerPoint presentations to supplement the curriculum, provide outreach to social studies teachers across the state, create official "mock ballots" for students to vote, and administer the mock election on a vast and statewide scale.

Each person signs up to participate on our website: VoteOregon.org/OregonMockElection, where they gain access to all the materials necessary to conduct mock election. This included the curriculum, PowerPoints, ballot measure summaries, and official mock election voting ballots. This year the League of Women Voters emphasized the importance of learning about ballot measures, and provided students with extensive, easy to read, and non-partisan summaries of the seven ballot measures. These were REAL issues that voters saw on their ballots this election cycle, and it provoked a number of well-informed and productive classroom discussions.

When it comes to civic education and informing future voters, there is nothing more important than providing resources to students, teachers, and schools across our wonderful state of Oregon. Many educators and organizations have embraced the importance of educating future voters, which is why programs like the Oregon Student Mock Election continue to be solid foundations in Oregon classrooms, schools, and districts. In 2014, we improved our game further, and made technology a cornerstone in this year's project. We set our sights on schools that have historically been less likely to sign up in the past, and saw unprecedented levels of teacher and student involvement. The Oregon Student Mock Election has a bright future, and the renovations that occurred during this year are what makes it once again an award-winning project.

2) Please state the goals of the project, and describe the techniques or strategies you used to meet them. **Did you make use of new technology as part of your strategy? If so, how?**

The goal of the Oregon Student Mock Election project in 2014 was to emphasize the importance of mid-term elections. We wanted to demonstrate to students that voting is constant, important, and could be exciting in ways they never realized. This year we highlighted the seven Oregon state ballot measures, which included issues like legalizing marijuana, labelling genetically modified foods, and establishing a “top-two” primary system. Technology was a huge part of what allowed us to get our information to students in a quick and refined fashion. We revolutionized our website to make all materials available online, and we used e-mail, web newsletters, and press releases to expand our reach to social study teachers across the state. We completely reconstructed the PowerPoint presentations to adhere to new technology and new election statistics, and even constructed two brand new PowerPoint presentations that 1. Taught the important history of American political parties, and 2. Discussed the effect voter turnout has on our political system. We shared web resources to “find out your political party” and compare candidate positions. We widely shared a YouTube video that Rock the Vote Campaign produced this year called “Turn Out For What?” It featured a catchy song and prominent celebrities like Lil John, Whoopie Goldberg, and Fred Armisen. Social media was a platform for us as well, as it was a place where we shared information concerning mock election on twitter and Facebook. Speaking of media, we even created a new logo!

Technology served as one of our key launch pads this year to engage teachers, students, parents, and organizations in the Oregon Student Mock Election. It was great to see so many people get excited for mid-term elections this year, and much of it was thanks to the social buzz the Oregon Student Mock Election created.

3) Describe the participants in your project at each **stage** of its implementation. How many people were involved and what were their roles? Were they teachers, students, parents, or others?

The Oregon Student Mock Election had four levels of participation this year as listed below:

1. **Volunteers.** Volunteers consisted primarily of members of the League of Women Voters of Oregon. These volunteers were an essential part of the Mock Election as they worked tirelessly behind the scenes from beginning to end. Early on, we had League volunteers who were current or former teachers update the 90 page Oregon Student Mock Election curriculum. Once fall came around, we utilized the League’s “Voter Service” team. Our Voter Service team is responsible for researching and providing materials for the *Oregon Voters’ Guides*. These guides are widely published and made available to the public every election cycle. All the research and non-partisan material gathered by this team was used for the Mock Election. Our volunteers were instrumental in providing adequate, updated, and thorough information to help students cast an informed vote.

2. **Sponsors.** We had several organizations and state departments that elected to endorse, support, or co-sponsor our efforts this year. Their names and roles are listed below. **i. The Oregon Department of Education:** After our volunteers updated the curriculum, the Oregon Department of Education looked over the curriculum to ensure it aligned with Oregon Social Study Standards. The department also provided us with additional resources for teachers to utilize in their classroom, including language requirements for Spanish speaking students.

ii. The Oregon Secretary of State Department: The Secretary of State Department, in particular the Elections Division, was heavily involved in promoting mock election and assisting with outreach this year. We received a letter of endorsement from Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown speaking to the merits of the program and encouraging teachers to participate (A copy is attached to the end of this application).

iii. The Oregon Council for the Social Studies: The Oregon Council for the Social Studies is an association of social studies teachers across the state of Oregon. This year at their annual Fall Conference, they invited the League of Women Voters to do a presentation on the Oregon Student Mock Election. This was a wonderful opportunity for our coordinator to give a hands-on presentation of the curriculum, demonstrate classroom activities, and answer questions. This collaboration with the Oregon Council for the Social Studies was essential in our efforts to help social studies teachers become interested in learning more about Mock Election.

iv. The Oregon Education Association: Sponsor and supporter, assisted with outreach.

v. The Oregon Parent Teacher Association: Sponsor and supporter, assisted with outreach.

vi. The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association: Press contact, assisted with outreach.

vii. The Multnomah Bar Foundation: The Oregon Student Mock Election would not have been possible without the funds we received from the Multnomah Bar Foundation. Not only did we receive grant funds from this organization, but they were extremely active in supporting the League's efforts to promote Mock Election. They remained our partners in every aspect.

3. **Teachers** – This work on behalf our volunteers and sponsors was to encourage teachers to sign up to coordinate a Mock Election in their classroom without feeling like it was a lot of extra work on their end. The Oregon Mock Election provided all the necessary tools, instructions, and materials – all teachers had to do was bring it to their classroom.

4. **Students** – Ultimately, the main goal of this project was to get students excited about voting. This year, we had students from elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and even community colleges who reported that for the first time they felt their voices were taken seriously. The active participation of future voters is always the ultimate measure of success for our program.

4) Who was your intended audience or who did you hope the project would impact? How well did you succeed in reaching them? How do you know?

Our intended audience for this project were primarily teachers and students. We wanted to make this project something that both teachers and students enjoyed doing, and to learn skills that would translate beyond the classroom. We wanted participation in the Oregon Student Mock Election to mean something for teachers and students, to witness brilliant minds become fully civically engaged voters in the real world. Since it was a mid-term election, we specifically focused our outreach on teachers in the classroom to sign up and be the leaders for mock election. To engage this leadership and keep the momentum of mock election going, we communicated through e-mail, newsletters, and attended conferences to reach out and excite hundreds of social studies teachers throughout Oregon. Ultimately, this outreach paid off because we saw unprecedented success in a number of ways:

- An increased proportion of middle and elementary schools teachers participated this year compared to 2012.

- Community colleges participated this year.

- We saw district-wide efforts to establish a community of teachers participating.

- Increased communication from teachers – our use of technology allowed teachers to communicate with our coordinator easily and quickly.
- Because of our clear and constant communication with teachers, encouragement to report results, and easy reporting methods: Reporting rates nearly doubled this year; with a 22% reporting rate increase from 2012.

5) Did your project (a) include effective outreach to at-risk students or parents likely to be nonvoters? (b) significantly improve parent involvement in the Mock Election? (c) increase overall participation rates in the Mock Election?

We are proud of the headway we made in under-privileged communities this year. A number of at-risk children and young adults learned the importance of voting by participating in this project, and it is our hope that these skills will turn into active civic engagement in the future. The League of Women Voters is an organization that works tirelessly in their efforts to reach out to underprivileged individuals, at-risk communities, or people likely to be nonvoters. This year, in addition to publishing our large print and audio voter guides for those that are visually impaired, we began publishing our *Spanish Voters' Guides*. Many of the schools who participated in the Mock Election used both our English and Spanish guides to meet student needs. Our Coordinator and Education Fund Chair had a wrap-up session with Mr. Luis Nava, the League's new Spanish translator, to brainstorm ways to continue reaching out to Spanish speaking communities in 2016. We also worked closely with the Chemekta Community College GED night class, a class where many of the students grew up in at-risk communities, or spoke English as a second language. We worked together and gave them a special late night time to report their results. This outreach to at-risk students, or parents likely to be nonvoters, saw significant success in the whole scheme of the mock election. Even during a midterm election, reporting rates increased by 22%. Our hope is that we will continue to make a difference in underprivileged communities, and encourage more community college classrooms to sign up or use our materials in the future. Any small difference made in a child's life has a monumental impact, especially if it means they will vote someday despite what statistics may predict about them.

6) What was/were the specific outcome(s) of the project? Did it have measurable impact? What criteria did you use to measure impact or success?

Official results of the Mock Election were calculated on October 30, 2014. Students across the state of Oregon voted for the following:

Candidate Races

Governor of Oregon – John Kitzhaber Congressional District 1 – Suzanne Bonamici Congressional District 2 – Greg Walden Congressional District 3 – Earl Blumenauer Congressional District 4 – Peter DeFazio Congressional District 5 – Kurt Schrader US Senator – Jeff Merkley

Oregon State Ballot Measures #86 Oregon Student Opportunity Fund *Results of Vote: PASS #87* Allow judges to serve in more than one branch of government *Results of Vote: PASS #88* Oregon "Driver Card" *Results of Vote: DOES NOT PASS #89* Equal Rights Amendment *Results of Vote: PASS #90* Change in Primary Election System *Results of Vote: PASS #91* Marijuana Legalization *Results of Vote: PASS #92* GMO Labeling *Results of Vote: PASS*

In general, students voted to retain ALL incumbents among the candidates, and voted to pass all but ONE of the Oregon state ballot measures. The most exciting part of seeing these results was comparing them to how the general population voted. Less than a week after students voted, Oregon saw the election results for the General Election. The public also voted to retain all incumbents, but they voted down ballot measures 86, 88, 90, and 92. This summary information is important when comparing and contrasting the mind-sets of future voters against current voters. Students were consistent with the public in voting for the same candidates, but they overwhelmingly voted in favor of Measure 86, the Oregon Opportunity Fund, where the general public overwhelmingly voted against the measure. This ballot measure would have allotted a special fund to help financially struggling students through college. However, it was unpopular among the general public because it authorized the state of Oregon to run a larger deficit. It is clear that a majority of this generation of students have very specific priorities and goals in mind for Oregon's political future. Future voters see first-hand the struggle of being able to afford college, and voted together with the hopes that they themselves and their

peers had the chance to attend college someday. The measurable impact here is that kids have a voice, something to say, and many times it is not just an echo of older generations. We also received great feedback on the mock election from an anonymous survey, which is another way we measured the success of the project this year.

7) In what way did your project advance the goals of the National Student/Parent Mock Election to (a) increase the belief that voting is important? (b) improve political decision-making

ability? (c) increase informed involvement on current issues (d) increase the belief that social studies classes are relevant? (e) increase student's discussion of political and election topics with their parents? (f) decrease the sense of powerlessness?

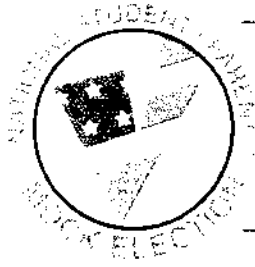
This project advanced the goals of the National Student/Parent Mock Election in a number of ways this year:

- a. To increase the belief that voting is important, which remains the number one goal for the Oregon program, we included an entire study unit, engaging games, and two PowerPoint presentations focused on the importance of voting in our curriculum. (Unit 3 materials and PowerPoint outlines titled "Your Voice is Your Vote" and "The Power of the Vote" are attached to the end of this application).
- b. To introduce and improve students' political decision-making ability, we made available a number of helpful voting resources so that students could cast a wide information gathering net. The resources made immediately available to them included the Oregon Secretary of State Voter Pamphlet, and the League of Women Voters Voter Guides. However, our efforts did not stop here. We encouraged students and teachers to look beyond these resources, to follow news sources and non-profits like Rock the Vote and Bus Project. We had an entire unit in our curriculum dedicated to teaching students how to collect, analyze and assess voting information – and ultimately teach them how to be an informed voter (Unit 6 titled "How to be an informed voter" attached to this application).
- c. To increase informed involvement on current issues we used daily social media outreach, and encouraged teachers and students to follow the progress of the candidate races and Oregon State ballot measures. Our local League chapters hosted debates between candidates in districts across the state, and schools were encouraged to contact local officials to speak about current issues in Oregon politics.
- d. To increase the belief that social studies classes are relevant, we attended the Oregon Council for the Social Studies Conference in October of 2014. It is a conference specifically designed for social study teachers, and we were endorsers of the conference as well as presenters.
- e. Once again, we used candidate debate forums and ballot measures to create a relevant discussion of current political topics. This dialogue in the classroom resulted in conversations at home, where students and parents could have an informed discussion about real ballot measures and real candidate races in Oregon.
- f. All in all, it is extremely important to make students aware that people ARE listening; that their voices are being heard. Part of the Oregon Student Mock Election's voting method is to print out the ballots, which have been constructed in a very official format, where students can mark their votes on paper and confidentially be collected by teachers they trust. Many aspects of the entire curriculum also pushed home the idea that voting matters, and that students are anything but powerless.

8) **Is there anything else you believe** makes your project an award-winning effort?

This project has been an important part of Oregon schools for 12 years now. What makes this year different is how FRESH the project looks and our prospects for the future because of this renovation. In 2014, because of new approaches and tireless effort by our organization, we made headway in places previously thought impossible. We increased reporting rates during a mid-term year which is something we have never done before, we updated our outreach through the window of technology and found that teachers were eager to communicate for the first time, and we sought to inform at-risk children and future voters about the importance of civic involvement. All these aspects combined, and the efforts put forth by the League of Women Voters and our partners, truly makes this year's revolutionized and modern project an award-winning effort.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals Award For Outstanding Contributions To Teaching Democracy In Conjunction with The National Student/Parent Mock Election Presented to Jefferson Middle School Champaign, Illinois:



National Student/Parent MOCK ELECTION

nationalmockelection.org

2014 Mock Election Award Application

The American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Student Councils, and the League of Women Voters all sponsor awards for outstanding voter education projects in cooperation with the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

DEADLINE: January 16, 2015

Please read the list below and check the award(s) for which you are applying.

I am applying for

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS (Schools) "For outstanding contributions to teaching democracy"**

Applicant Name: Christine Adrian

Contact Person: Christine Adrian

Title: Social Studies Teacher and Building Leader

Address: 1115 S. Crescent Dr.

City: Champaign

State/Zip: IL/61820

Work Phone: 217-351-3790

E-mail Address:

Fax: 217-351-3794x

Project Name: Making a Democracy Work: Finding Our Voice Through
Voter Participation

You may use this form or answer questions on separate sheets of paper. Please observe a 500- word limit for each answer. Forms must be typed or printed.

1) Please describe your project (brief project summary.)

Our project examined why voter turnout rates were low in U.S. elections compared with other democracies throughout the world. Students looked at the voter registration process for our state, as well as information regarding voting in general in the United States. Were the laws/rules fair? Do they contribute to low voter turnout rates?

We then looked at why it was important to be an informed voter. We contemplated a populace without education and the effects that would have on a democracy. Students researched all of their candidates using candidate web pages, looking for their positions on the issues. It was then compared to their own views on the topic. Students learned that if an issue wasn't discussed, they must assume that the issue is not priority for that candidate.

A student team then worked on a "Get Out and Vote" campaign, making posters providing information on how to register to vote and why voting matters. The week before the elections, students could sign up through a voter registration booth offered at their lunch time. Students were not "required" to register, but had to make the choice to do so. Student volunteers ran the registration table.

Once the registration window closed, another team of election officials (students) compiled all voter registrations into a Google Spreadsheet, using Google Forms. Each registration was checked by three individuals to make sure information was entered correctly. From this, registration lists for each Social Studies class period were made and distributed.

On Tuesday, October 28th, two polling stations were set up in the building. Parent volunteers were stationed as election officials, making sure voters were checked in against voting rosters, maintaining a quiet polling place, and distributing "I Voted" stickers as they finished. Those students who didn't register were given a reading activity on why midterm elections are important.

2) Please state the goals of the project, and describe the techniques or strategies you used to meet them. Did you make use of new technology as part of your strategy? If so, how?

The goal in developing this unit of study was for students to understand what makes for a functioning democracy. Without an educated, voting populace, we run the risk of jeopardizing a true democracy. I wanted students to understand that citizens must be educated on the issues, for fear that if they do not, they might vote in someone who makes laws they do not agree with. If eligible voters do not vote in mass in a democracy, we sacrifice our voice, which is pinnacle to a representative democracy. The leaders are then elected by a few, which then veers towards a government that is more and more similar to dictatorship/tyranny.

As building leader for Social Studies, I needed to make sure all teachers were in line with this goal. I constructed an Election Website for teachers to help them plan informational lessons; as well as sharing lessons and documents via our shared Google Drive Folder.

These lessons started with students looking at general guidelines/facts for voter registration in the United States:

and specific rules for Illinois:

Students worked with a shared Google Doc file on teams of 2, noting what elements of voting registration was fair/not fair and why they felt that way:

Later, they added to this document by watching clips regarding voting experiences at the polling place. Students chatted via Google Docs (in shared document) working to agree on what issues deterred people from voting and what could be done about it.

The second prong of research was to look at voter turnout rates around the world, and then investigate why they thought it was that the United States' turnout rate was so low. Students worked again within Google Docs, this time in teams of 4, chatting with each other via the chat function to divide up a folder of research documents on the topic and complete the chart.

For the final part of their research, students were given a Ballot Notes assignment:

Using the candidates websites, students determined which candidates they most agreed with to determine who they wanted to vote for on election day.

All of this was completed using both Google Drive and the online classroom, Schoology.

Once student voter registration cards were collected, a group of 30 students worked in pairs to enter information into a Google Form, while the other checked the spreadsheet it fed into to check accuracy. This data was then aggregated into classroom rolls that teachers used to determine voter registration on voting day. It was also distributed to parent volunteers running polling place check in.

On voting day, all students went to electronic polling places. Charts and graphs were constructed to show voting results to teachers and students.

3) Describe the participants in your project at each stage of its implementation. How many people were involved and what were their roles? Were they teachers, students, parents, or others?

This election project included all parts of our school community.

As building leader, I organized the project and resources. All Social Studies teachers then delivered lesson plans and election information to students on grade level. Beyond Social Studies, the election website was shared with teachers in other subjects, so cross curricular activities would happen around the school.

Our Assistant Principal, Jesse Guzman, or librarian, Kim Anderson, and district tech, Julie Feit worked with me to make sure all polling places were arranged and ready from a technology standpoint on election day.

A team of 20 students designed voter registration/get out the vote posters for an advertising campaign in our school. Our students registered students: roughly 25 students at the three grade levels were involved in this endeavor. After registrations were collected, a team of 30 students inputted voter registrations into the computer to compile voter registration rolls for Social Studies teachers.

I worked in conjunction with Social Studies teachers and our PTSA to gather a team of 20 parent volunteers to run the polling places that day. In addition, we secured Carol Ammons, who is running for State Representative in district 103 to help run our polling places as well. This was a special treat for our kids.

4) Who was your intended audience or who did you hope the project would impact? How well did you succeed in reaching them? How do you know?

Our main goal, of course, was to reach all of our students to help them feel a part of the voting process. In addition, I wanted kids to see the importance of voting, and advocate through action that our students change the tide of voting turnout and exercise their right to vote.

I feel that goal was achieved in looking at our voter registration. Over 77% of our students registered to vote. None of them were required to register; it was not for points either mandatory or extra credit. The only things motivating our students were the actual content instruction and the idea of being a part of a national vote.

In addition, the hope is always to talk with parents and get parents out there to vote that might not have voted otherwise. I do know from the parent teacher conferences that we just held that kids are talking about the elections at home with their adults. I conducted a survey with students after the election, and near half responded that they talked with parents about the election.

Also, students overwhelmingly responded that voting was important in our survey-only 10 of 120 students did not respond yes.

The question then was asked: *How likely are you to vote when you are 18, and if so, why? From some of the many who answered very likely:*

"Because, before certain people couldn't vote like blacks or women so now we can vote"

"Because we are all taught in our childhood to vote. It's something i just picture myself doing when I'm an adult."

"I put pretty likely because I think I would want to start having a political voice as soon as possible"

"I have always wanted to have some say in government, I have always seen it as an injustice (the minimum voting age). I would like to exercise my right as soon as I am able."

"Before I started this class I didn't think it was that important to vote but now that I'm here I know how valuable it is to vote for someone you want to make decisions for you"

"Because I would want to be able to vote after watching people in my household vote. it kind of makes you apart of the way history happens."

"Because if they don't have everyone's opinion then they might elect someone or approve a law that isn't fair to me or other people."

"I learned a lot about the elections in class and voting so I see why voting is important. This and I want to be able to have a say in the people who are above me. I don't want to regret not voting when the people who were elected don't benefit me or my family."

5) Did your project (a) include effective outreach to at-risk students or parents likely to be nonvoters? (b) significantly improve parent involvement in the Mock Election? (c) increase overall participation rates in the Mock Election?

My school has a poverty rate of 61% and 14% in special education. Through their research, students found that adults in poverty vote at much lower levels than their citizen counterparts in higher income brackets.

I specifically tailored my research issues to look at low voter turnout to involve those kids who may not have families who make voting a regular activity. Our video clips from PBS' POV documentary looked at how voters are disenfranchised in poorer districts with often much more packet polling places with inefficient voting systems in comparison with richer districts. In addition, we examined who gets "left out" when it comes to voter registration. It is fair for felons to lose their voting voice, for example? What roadblocks are there for those living in poverty (for example, having to get time off to vote, only to encounter long lines that may run past their lunch times). We examined whether people of color still face roadblocks to voting or if that was a thing of our past.

We also got an African American candidate, Carol Ammons (running for State Legislature) to come and participate in the project. This demonstrated to my students that someone that looks like them views voting as important and civic duty as important. Students were very excited to meet a person running for Illinois Legislature.

Again, we had over 77% of our students register and vote, so I believe that our at-risk students were affected by this project.

6) What was/were the specific outcome(s) of the project? Did it have measurable impact? What criteria did you use to measure impact or success?

I wanted our students to understand the importance of registering to vote, being informed voters as well as going out to the polls on voting day. My hope is that in the future, our students will go out and vote and be a part of an increasing voting populace that shows up to the polls on voting day.

77% of our students registered and voted in our Mock Election. No points or rewards for registering and voting were awarded for students. The only payoff was the fulfillment of being a part of the experience. We can reasonably conclude that our instruction on the topic of the elections had an effect on our students.

I surveyed a group of 120 middle school students. Probably the most encouraging data conveyed in the survey is the amount of students who understand that voting is an important activity-91%. Perhaps more importantly, 93% of our students polled said they are likely to vote when they turn 18.

7) In what way did your project advance the goals of the National Student/Parent Mock Election to (a) increase the belief that voting is important? (b) improve political decision-making ability? (c) increase informed involvement on current issues (d) increase the belief that social studies classes are relevant? (e) increase student's discussion of political and election topics with their parents? (f) decrease the sense of powerlessness?

A) Our preparation for the election focused in on why voting is at the heart of a democracy. In addition, we secured parent volunteers and a candidate running for State Representative to show that adults care about the student election. Finally, we secured a picture in our local paper's front page, which showed students that adults are interested in their participation in the electoral process. After the election a group of 120 students were polled. Only 10 said either voting was unimportant or that they were not sure if it was.

B) Students were a research project to compile Ballot Notes (link provided above). Students discussed the dangers of an uneducated voting populace; citizens run the danger of voting in people they actually disagree with or those who might try to interrupt the democratic process.

C) As a part of their ballot notes, students had to look at what issues were important to each candidate and their stand on these issues. Students then had to think through how they felt on the issues in order to conclude which candidate best matched their beliefs. Since our students watch CNN News every day, they also noted issues that were missing from candidate's platforms. This was also used to shape their voting choices.

D) This unit on elections is a part of a larger unit on Civics and effort by our school to incorporate the College, Career and Civic Life Framework. I modeled this unit as closely to real life experiences of voters and to tie what the students were learning back into the Social Studies concepts learned in class. Students will weave the ideas of participatory citizenship to understand how citizens in our history practiced these same ideas and skills to make the democratic form of government we enjoy today.

E) In the survey conducted after the election, near half the students said they discussed the election with their parents.

F) Again, in the survey conducted, near half felt powerful after voting. Some quotes from students:

The question asked was: *Did voting make you feel powerful, and if yes, why?*

"Because its like they're giving you a choice to vote and taking it makes me feel like i did my responsibilities."

"Because it made me feel like my vote counted it made me feel special."

"Because it feels like I was heard by powerful people or someone who cares"

"Because even though I'm not grown up yet i still get the chance to choose who i think a good leader will be."

"Because it kind of was like preparation for voting in the real world."

"Because I felt like I had a voice in our democracy, it wasn't just young/adults voting, it was most of the community contributing."

"Because usually kids don't have a say in things like that and we have no voice cause its "not our place" but this was our place and we got to have some say"

"It made me feel powerful because I want to tempt real voters (18+) into voting for the people I did."

8) Is there anything else you believe makes your project an award-winning effort?

The project I organized this year got kids involved in all aspects of what makes elections tick; the importance of voter registration, informed voting that focuses in on what the politicians say/don't say; community involvement in all stages of the election. It was an extremely successful project that resulted in students who understand the importance of voting and plan to do it in the future.