

Electing a President

An Instructional Simulation



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An Instructional Simulation

The Purpose

Instructional simulations give students an opportunity to have a deeper understanding of learning through the process of conducting the simulation; students take on the role of a delegate to a political convention and run a model convention; students are learning various aspects of our election process that are interdependently involved with other aspects.

The key element that differentiates instructional simulation from other teaching methods is the specification of a conceptual structure within which students interact and experience firsthand the relationship between concepts.

This simulation of political conventions involves both critical thinking and creative thinking:

- Critical thinking is analytical, objective and selective. When students think critically, they make choices based on researched information and from personal experiences.
- Creative thinking is generative, subjective and expansive. When students think creatively, they are open to and generate new ideas.
- Each way of thinking is helpful as students' process information and demonstrates their understanding by producing a product that conveys that understanding.

During Campaign 2012, there are nine political conventions taking place throughout the United States. Additionally, there are expected to be at least 15 candidates from parties on the ballot in November, 2012 and the possibility of another 4 independent candidates without party affiliation. This is why it is important for our students to understand the process we go through in America to elect a president and other leaders within our great country.



Teacher Role

The teacher's role is to be the organizer and facilitator of the simulation project. The teacher is the expert on his/her students and school. Teachers know the most appropriate ways to effectively use frameworks to guide students through simulations. Teachers can make use of

previous learning to scaffold what students would need to know, understand, and do in developing their own simulations.

This activity is designed to be a performance based project. Teachers can use an interdisciplinary approach to learning as a method of bringing together students, classes, and grade levels in an end of the year culminating project. This project is especially relevant during the fall as our country moves towards the presidential election. This activity will also offer opportunities for teachers and students to dig deeper by engaging in the two roles. The format allows students to embrace both state delegate role and that of a committee member focused on an issue. It is recommended that schools use colors and mascots of their schools, instead of those of national political parties as this project is about learning how a process is conducted and how location within our country and issues relate to the process.

People make their election choice with the knowledge they gain from understanding the issues of our time. Our goal is to facilitate students to take an issue that they view as important, research it to the point that they can explain what it is, analyze the issue to understand the different viewpoints, define this information in a written format by using the enclosed Issue Committee Member Worksheet and make an informed decision based on their own understanding. This activity will allow the students to be the critical readers, thinkers, and writers that they need to be as they develop their own ideas and ideals about what America should be or look like in the future.

In the issues section there is greater detail, including a suggestion of issues for elementary students and one for middle school students. This list is a suggestion and may be used as teachers deem appropriate. Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with their school's administration team prior to beginning the issue portion of the simulation project as a professional courtesy and to best avoid potentially controversial issues.

Teacher Check List



- Reflect on and assess the skills and content that I have used with my students this year that other students could use to scaffold in this simulation project
- Identify skills and content that I would need for my students to know, understand, and do to successfully complete the simulation project

- Collaborate with my colleagues to organize our students either by classes, grade levels or across grade spans to appropriately and effectively use the skills and content for this simulation project framework
- Collaborate and communicate with my colleagues and administrative team to finalize a list of possible issues to research
- Use the Big 6 Research Skills and Process as my students develop the information they will use to identify the location they will represent as a delegate, either individually or in small groups
- Brainstorm with my students the types of products (one sample is included) that will be used to display information about the location that they represent
- Create the various products (one sample is included) that display the information discovered from researching an issue and be sure to present all aspects of the issue, but not a particular stand, that needs to be a student's individual choice to make
- Incorporate mathematical skills into the simulation project by using student's math skills to explain surveys, polls, etc. found in the research conducted as a delegate or a member of an issue committee.
- Incorporate multiple content areas as our students create their simulation project for the presidential election convention, i.e., science, health, physical education, art, music, technology skills, etc.
- Reflect on my process of teaching this project and revise the project plans to include what I might do to make it a more meaningful process in the future

Student Roles

Students would serve in two primary roles, a *Delegate* and *Issue Committee Member*. These two primary roles would insure that all students could participate with the role of being a delegate representing their state or territory and as a member of a committee to study an issue.



Delegate

- Students will be a member of a delegation that represents one of the fifty states or one of the eligible territories (District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands). This makes for a total of 56 different delegations including both states and territories. Although the territories are represented at political conventions, they don't all get to vote for president in the actual election. The process for political parties actually picking delegates for their conventions is different depending on the party. Each one has its own process and we have made this a much simplified version to allow for practicality and logistics within your school.
- Students are placed on delegations representing each of the states and territories. The method used at each school would be directly related to the school size and the appropriateness of blending grade levels. For example, schools may want to do this by grade level or by grade band. By grade band, K-2 or 3-5 or 6-8 depending on the school's organization as a K-5 or K-8 grade span.
- Students may also research how people become delegates. There are a tremendous variety of answers to this and it depends on the party and the state/territory as to how it happens, but this may be included in the information about their location.
- Give students a DELEGATE sheet to use to:
 - State the name of the place they represent
 - Describe the location
 - What we are famous for at our location
 - Places to see or things to do when visiting our location



Issue Committee Member

- Students will be members of an Issue Committee with a variety of other delegates who represent other parts of the country. The committee's purpose is to identify the issue, the various perspectives to the issue and possible solutions or compromises to the issue based on representation of their location and viewpoints.
- Every delegate is selected for membership on an Issue Committee.
- Possible issues are listed below. *Remember, only use those that you would deem **AGE APPROPRIATE**.*
- **POSSIBLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT ISSUES** (listed alphabetically) –Animal Rights, The Internet, Child Support, Climate Change/Global Warming, Crime, Death Penalty, Environment, Friends Being Mean (Bullying), Gay Rights, Health Care, Homeland Security, Illegal Immigrants, Privacy on the Internet, School Prayer, Social Media, Security, Universal Health Care, Veterans, War & Peace, War on Terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Welfare and Poverty, and Others???
- **POSSIBLE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ISSUES** (listed alphabetically) –Abortion, Affirmative Action, Animal Rights, Censorship & The Internet, Child Support, Church State Separation, Civil Rights, Climate Change/Global Warming, Crime, Death Penalty, Drugs, Education, Energy & Oil, Environment, Firearms, Foreign Policy, Gay Rights, Gun Control, Health Care, Homeland Security, Illegal Immigrants, Immigrants, Infrastructure & Technology, Language, Marine Biology, Medical Marijuana, Medicare & Medicaid, Musical Arts, Nuclear Energy & Weapons, Nuclear Testing, Patient Rights, Political Corruption, Privacy on the Internet, School Prayer, Social Media, Social Security, Veterans, War & Peace, War on Terror, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Welfare and Poverty, and Others???
- To arrive at the above list, we surveyed a very small group of students. We accomplished this task by both giving them a list of topics which they could circle that they liked or draw a line through to indicate that they had no interest in the topic. Additionally, we ask them to suggest any topics/ideas that they thought of as the list was evaluated by them during the process and have added those to our list. Finally, we ask them on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the least interested in evaluating the issues or 10 in being most interested. The consensus of the students was a 7, so you might want to try this with your students. I would let them do this individually at first, then in small groups before taking to the level of the whole class. Having their input in the process will help support their interest in doing the research and have a glimpse into their world perspective on issues that they see as important to them.

I am a DELEGATE from:



Describe the State or Territory you represent:

We are FAMOUS for:

Places to SEE or Things to DO are:

I am a Member of the Issue Committee for:



Here is a description of my ISSUE:

Compare and Contrast my issue with research evidence:

Possible Solutions:



History

What's not in the United States Constitution about Elections?

- **Political parties** are such a basic part of our political system today, which many people might assume the Constitution must at least mention parties in one way or another... but there is absolutely no mention of political parties anywhere in the Constitution. In fact, in the times of the Articles of Confederation, there weren't even any parties; factions, perhaps; regional blocs, yes; but no parties. Not until the Jackson and Van Buren administrations did organized parties really take hold in the American political system.
- The **Primary Election** season can be exciting and heady as candidates for the presidency, and other national and state offices, vie for their party's endorsement and spot on the ballot. Many people today assume that because the process is second nature that it must be spelled out in the Constitution. Nowhere in the Constitution, however, will you find any mention of how elections should be conducted. Since the Constitution is silent on the issue, we have been free to develop any system we wished, and the result is the system of primary elections we now use. Though the point of the party elections is to select a single member of the party for the "real" election, the courts have still exerted influence, reasoning that through primaries, disenfranchisement can be effected. Party elections, then, must be open to anyone asserting party affiliation — parties cannot, for example, bar any person of color solely on the basis of race. Since they are party elections, however, the Supreme Court has ruled that primary elections can bar voters not registered with that party.
- **The Right To Vote** - The Constitution contains many phrases, clauses, and amendments detailing ways people cannot be denied the right to vote. You cannot deny the right to vote because of race or gender. Citizens of Washington DC can vote for President; 18-year-olds can vote; you can vote even if you fail to pay a poll tax. The Constitution also requires that anyone who can vote for the "most numerous branch" of their state legislature can vote for House members and Senate members. Note that in all of this, though, the Constitution never explicitly ensures the right to vote, as it does the right to speech, for example. It does require that Representatives be chosen and Senators be elected by "the People," and who comprises "the People" has been expanded by the aforementioned amendments several times. Aside from these requirements, though, the qualifications for voters are left to the states. And as long as the qualifications do not conflict with anything in the Constitution, that right can be withheld. For example, in Texas, persons declared mentally incompetent and felons currently in prison or on probation are denied the right to vote. It is interesting to note that though the 26th

Amendment requires that 18-year-olds must be able to vote, states can allow persons younger than 18 to vote, if they chose to.

- **Congressional Districts** divide almost every state in the United States into two or more chunks; each district should be roughly equal in population throughout the state and indeed, the entire country. Each district elects one Representative to the House of Representatives. The number of districts in each state is determined by the decennial census, as mandated by the Constitution. But districts are not mentioned in the Constitution. The United States Code acknowledges districting, but leaves the "how's" to the states (gerrymandering, however, is unconstitutional [as seen in *Davis v Bandemer*, 478 U.S. 109 (1986), though, the intent of gerrymandering is difficult to prove]).



Additional History Notes

The history of political conventions in America is so long and steeped in lore that it's easy to overlook that political conventions were not always part of the political landscape. In the early days of the United States, presidential candidates were usually nominated by a caucus of members of Congress.

By the 1820s, that idea was falling out of favor, helped along by the rise of Andrew Jackson and his appeal to the common man. The election of 1824, which was denounced as "The Corrupt Bargain," also energized Americans to find a better way to select candidates and presidents. After Jackson's election in 1828, party structures strengthened, and the idea of national political conventions began to make sense. At that time there had been party conventions held at the state level, but no national conventions.

The Anti-Masonic Party Holds the First National Political Convention in September 1831

The first national political convention was held by a long-forgotten and extinct political party, the Anti-Masonic Party. The party, as the name indicates, was opposed to the masonic order and its presumed influence in American politics. The Anti-Masonic Party, which began in upstate New York but gained adherents around the country, convened in Philadelphia in 1830, and agreed to have a nominating convention the following year. The various state organizations chose delegates to send to the national convention, which set a precedent for all later political conventions. The Anti-Masonic Convention was held in Baltimore, Maryland on September 26, 1831, and was attended by 96 delegates from ten states. The party nominated William Wirt of

Maryland as their candidate for president. He was a peculiar choice, as it came out that Wirt had once been a mason.



Functions of Conventions

Originally, the main purpose of political conventions was to **nominate the party's candidate for president**. In the 1800s, the movement in the United States was to place more political power directly in the hands of the citizens. Political conventions were one way of doing this: Previously, candidates were nominated in secret caucuses by members of Congress; candidates would now be chosen by delegates who were selected at the state or county level by the party members.

The democratization of presidential elections eventually took the nominating function away from the conventions. People wanted more direct control over their party's nominees, so the **presidential primaries** came into use (although some states still use caucuses). Party members vote in the primaries to choose whom they want to represent their party in the upcoming election. By the time of the convention, there is no suspense about who will be the nominee -- it has been known for months.

Political conventions serve other purposes beyond nominating the party candidate, which is why they're still around. The convention offers party members a chance to gather together and discuss the party's **platform**. The platform is the party's stance on the political issues of the day. For a long time, the convention was a place for **political debate**, and important decisions were made there. In 1860, the Democratic Party debated the government's right to outlaw slavery. When the party adopted the position that the Supreme Court could decide the slavery issue, delegates from several southern states walked out, resulting in the Southern Democratic Party. In 1980, Senator Edward Kennedy fought against incumbent Jimmy Carter's economic plan. Although Carter defeated Kennedy for the nomination, Kennedy's debate forced Carter to radically change his plan.

Today, even this function of the convention has been largely stripped away. The conventions have been streamlined, with important events and speeches scheduled for prime-time television hours. The parties work to eliminate any evidence of debate or disunity within the party. The political conventions have now been reduced to the status of infomercials,

marketing the ideas and personalities of the party to the public. While the conventions serve to unify the party and generate party pride, the "advertisement for the party" has become the primary function of political conventions today.



Historic Conventions

Perhaps the most infamous political convention was the **1968 Democratic National Convention** in Chicago (see below), but there have been other important events at conventions. In 1888, abolitionist and former slave **Frederick Douglass** became the first black person to receive a vote at a political convention -- a single vote at the Republican convention.

In 1908, Democrats added legislation to their platform that would **separate the interests of corporations from those of Republicans**. They felt that corporations and the Republicans were too closely allied, a theme that remains relevant almost 100 years later.

In 1940, two unique events occurred at political conventions. First, Franklin D. Roosevelt was nominated for a **third term as president**. After some debate over his choice of vice president, he accepted. Second, the Republicans held the first ever televised convention that year.

The 2000 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles was marked by extensive protests in support of numerous causes. Pro-union, gay rights, anti-corporate welfare, pro-environmental and other movements made their voices heard a good distance from the convention site, due to the heavy presence of security fences and police officers. A performance by the politically active rock group **Rage Against the Machine** was interrupted by police, who used pepper spray and fired rubber bullets at fleeing spectators.

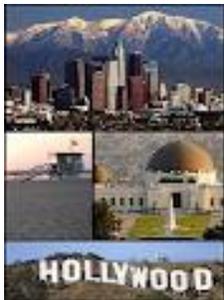
Location of Conventions

Chicago has been the nation's most popular political convention city, in part because of its geographic centrality. Between 1860 and 1996, Chicago hosted 14 Republican and 11 Democrat presidential nominating conventions, plus one notable Progressive Party assembly. Chicago's closest competitors for the most presidential conventions are Baltimore with 10, followed by Philadelphia's 9. Chicago hosted another double convention in 1932. First, Republicans glumly gathered in the new Chicago Stadium during the depths of Great Depression to renominate President Herbert C. Hoover. Two weeks later, Democrats gathered in the same hall and selected Franklin D. Roosevelt over Al Smith on the fourth ballot. Roosevelt flew to Chicago to deliver the first-ever convention acceptance speech.

Also in Chicago, Republicans gathered in the Stockyards International Amphitheatre in July 1952 to nominate General Dwight D. Eisenhower on the first ballot. The first national television audience was treated to a fistfight between delegates for Eisenhower and those for Robert Taft. Democrats convened in the same hall to nominate Illinois governor Adlai E. Stevenson II.

What are other locations of conventions and discuss their contribution to the process?

HINT: See the front cover for two of the major locations and identify those below for the additional seven that will take place during 2012.





Political Conventions Day-by-Day

Four days of speeches, candidates and lots of politics

Although the presidential nominations have largely been settled during the primary/caucus cycle in recent elections, the national party conventions continue to be an important part of the American political system. As you watch the convention this year, here's what's happening on each of the four days.

Day 1: The Keynote Address

Coming on the first evening of the convention, the keynote address is the first of many, many speeches to follow. Typically delivered by one of the party's most influential leaders and speakers, the keynote address is designed to rally the delegates and stir their enthusiasm. Almost without exception, the keynote speaker will emphasize the accomplishments of his or her party, while listing and harshly criticizing the shortcomings of the other party and its candidates. Should the party have more than one candidate seriously vying for nomination at the convention, the keynote speaker will conclude by urging all party members to make peace and support the successful candidate in the upcoming campaign. Sometimes, it even works.

Day 2: Credentials and Platforms

On the convention's second day, the party's Credentials Committee will determine the eligibility of each delegate to be seated and vote for nominees. Delegates and alternates from each state are typically chosen well before the convention, through the presidential primary and caucus system. The Credential Committee basically confirms the identity of the delegates and their authority to vote at the convention.

Day-two of the convention also features the adoption of the party's platform -- the stance their candidates will take on key domestic and foreign policy issues. Typically, these stances, also called "planks," have been decided well before the conventions. The platform of the incumbent party is usually created by sitting president or the White House staff. The opposition party seeks guidance in creating its platform from its leading candidates, as well as from leaders of business and industry, and a wide range of advocacy groups. The party's final platform must be approved by a majority of the delegates in a public roll-call vote.

Day 3: The Nomination

At last, what we came for, the nomination of candidates. To win the nomination, a candidate must get a majority -- more than half -- of the votes of all delegates. When the nominating roll call begins, each state's delegate chairman, from Alabama to Wyoming, may either nominate a candidate or yield the floor to another state. A candidate's name is officially placed into nomination through a nominating speech, delivered by the state chairman. At least one seconding speech will be delivered for each candidate and the roll call will continue until all candidates have been nominated.

At last, the speeches and demonstrations end and the real voting begins. The states vote again in alphabetical order. A delegate from each state will take the microphone and announce something very similar to, "Mr. (or Madame) Chairman, the great state of Texas casts all of its XX votes for the next president of the United States, Joe Doaks." The states may also split the votes of their delegations between more than one candidate. The roll call vote continues until one candidate has won the magic majority of the votes and is officially nominated as the party's presidential candidate. Should no single candidate win a majority, there will be more speeches, a lot more politics on the convention floor and more roll calls, until one candidate wins. Due mainly to the influence of the primary/caucus system, neither party has required more than one roll call vote since 1952.

Day 4: Picking a Vice Presidential Candidate

Just before everybody packs up and heads home, the delegates will confirm the vice presidential candidate named in advance by the presidential candidate. The delegates are not obligated to nominate the presidential candidate's choice for vice president, but they always do. Even though the outcome is a foregone conclusion, the convention will go through same cycle of nominations, speeches and voting.

As the convention closes, the presidential and vice presidential candidates deliver acceptance speeches and the unsuccessful candidates give rousing speeches urging everyone in the party to pull together to support the party's candidates.

The lights go out, the delegates go home, and the losers start running for the next election.





Generation Nation - <http://generationnation.org/>

- At this web site, under the title “Learning Center” is a wealth of resources. Hands-on civic learning opportunities are listed in the programs section and in other places.

The Echo Foundation Charlotte - <http://www.echofoundation.org/>

- In the upper right hand side of this site’s home page, click on the US Flag “We The People” Then scroll down to the bottom and find a resource titled “Democracy, Responsibility, and Civic Engagement” that has tremendous up to date information

NC Civic Education Consortium - <http://www.civics.unc.edu/>

- Go to the home page, at the top center of the page is “Database of Civic Resources” After going to this page, click on Schools and scroll down to access “Lesson” and/or “Activities”

Ben’s Guide to Government - <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>

- The first of three sites sponsored by the federal government with resources by grade span as well as for teachers and parents

Kids.gov - <http://www.kids.gov/>

- The second of three sites sponsored by the federal government with K-5 and 6-8 students in mind around the idea of “A safe place where kids can create, share, and learn”

USA.gov - <http://www.usa.gov/>

- The last of three sites sponsored by the federal government with easy access through the idea of “Government Made Easy”

League of Women Voters –

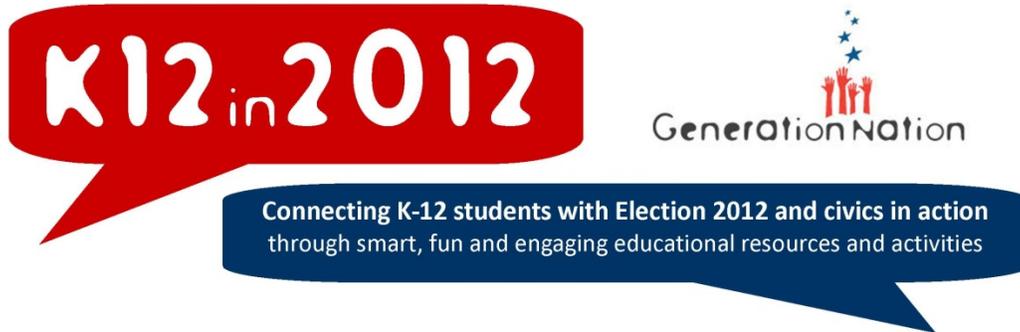
<http://www.lwv.org/content/electing-president-everything-you-need-know>

- This is a tremendous resource with lots of information for the teacher to facilitate the process.

Others?

The following two pages created and shared with us by GenerationNation offer other opportunities to share and learn through technology. Their site will continually be updated through the Inauguration occurring in January 2013.

2012 is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for K-12 students to see, and experience, civics, government and leadership in action. GenerationNation offers smart, fun, engaging, educational, and always nonpartisan programs and activities to educate and impact thousands of students (and the adults around them) in Charlotte and across the region, state and nation.



www.GenerationNation.org/k12in2012

Your source for nonpartisan educational resources, news, activities and other ways to learn about and get involved in political conventions, Election 2012 and more. Now through Inauguration Day (January 2013)!

- **Home page**
Find the latest news, opportunities, teaching resources and multimedia.
- **Learning Center**
Curriculum, resources and educational tools for teachers, parents, students, afterschool and youth programs...everyone.
- **Get involved**
News, events & things to do. Find out how to get involved in convention activities, volunteer, see where a president was born, experience elections with Kids Voting, and more.
- **Multimedia**
Your turn to put civics into action! See what K-12 students are doing to learn about and get involved in the excitement of 2012 – and share what YOU are doing. (More information on page 2.)
- **GenerationNation**
Learn more about GenerationNation and our year-round K-12 civic education, engagement and leadership programs including Kids Voting, Youth Civics, Youth Voice Leadership Alliance, classroom resources and more. (Want to learn more? Visit www.generationnation.org or email info@generationnation.org.)

#k12in2012 is YOUR TURN

GenerationNation wants to know what YOU are doing to put civics into action!

- Is your school or youth program doing something fun to learn about political conventions and Election 2012?
- What are students learning about civics, government and leadership, serving the community or getting engaged in the political process?
- As Charlotte takes the stage to host the convention, do you see politicians, media or celebrities in the city? Have a story about your city you want to tell to others?
- Want to help other students understand what happens at a convention, the differences between leaders and politicians, or how to find out about key issues in Election 2012?

Share your photos, videos and activities

Make a video, take a photo, or talk about an issue important to you. Then, put it on the web and share it with GenerationNation. We'll find it and share it so that everyone - maybe even the President - can see what students are doing to experience civics in action, political conventions, and Election 2012!

Facebook – www.facebook.com/generationnation

Like the [GenerationNation page](#), upload your photos and videos, talk with us, share links, get news, updates and more

Flickr - www.flickr.com/generationnation

Upload your photos to Flickr and tag **#k12in2012** and **#GenNation**
We'll add to our k12in2012 slideshow – and feature different photos every week

Twitter - www.twitter.com/GenNation

Connect with **@GenNation** and tag your tweets **#k12in2012** and **@GenNation**

YouTube - www.youtube.com/kvmecklenburg

Upload your videos to YouTube and tag **#k12in2012** and **#GenNation**
We'll find them and add them to the k12in2012 playlist...and maybe feature yours!

Other activities, educational resources, etc.

Have great curriculum or activities to share? Email us at info@generationnation.org or upload at <http://generationnation.org/index.php/k12in2012/media>

On the web: www.generationnation.org/k12in2012/