

Matching Candidates' Priorities

(90 Minutes)

OBJECTIVE

- ✓ Research local candidates and describe what issues they consider important
- ✓ Gather ideas and write a summary statement about a chosen candidate
- ✓ Describe how to find information about a candidate and his or her platform
- ✓ Analyze the role media plays in the public's view of a candidate

MATERIALS

- ✓ Computers/tablets (1 per group)
- ✓ Internet
- ✓ Selling the Candidate handout (1 per group)
- ✓ Take a Stand handout (1 per student)
- ✓ In the Media handout (1 per student)

GET READY

- ✓ Computer/tablet (1 per group)
- ✓ Print handouts (1 per student)
- ✓ Research appropriate, bi-partisan websites for steps 11 and 13

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prior to this lesson, students should be familiar with some of the current issues that are being discussed by candidates in anticipation of the upcoming election.
2. Students should also understand the executive offices that are currently up for election. Examples may include governor, attorney general, state legislator, mayor, school board member, and more depending on the upcoming election. Your Secretary of State's office website may be a helpful tool for learning more about this information.
3. Create small groups with 4-5 students in each and provide each with paper.
4. Instruct groups to brainstorm the major issues being discussed in regard to the upcoming election.

5. While brainstorming, ask groups to create a list of these major issues and record their findings on the chart paper. Students may keep the issues broad, such as "education" and "taxes" or choose specific propositions or initiatives.
6. Then ask groups to volunteer to share some of the issues they came up with. Rotate from group to group as they share an issue. Identify at least ten issues as a class.
7. Continue with the small groups and provide each student with a *Take a Stand* handout.
8. Ask the students in each group to discuss the ten issues identified as a class and choose 4 that they would like to focus on.
9. Instruct groups to work together to complete the portion of the handout where they write down the 4 issues they selected.
10. Students will need internet access and a tablet or computer. One tablet or computer per group will be sufficient.
11. Have the groups research a list of offices that are up for election and write them on their group paper. Suggest possible websites to conduct their research.
12. Then, ask each group to come to a consensus and choose one office that is up for election to research.
13. In their groups, students should research candidates running for the specific office they have chosen and find the candidates' stance on the 4 issues their group selected to focus on and complete the chart.
14. After all groups have completed their handout (excluding the discussion questions), rotate among groups and ask each group to share the information they learned with the class.



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Cont'd

15. Ask students to individually complete the discussion questions. They should review their handout and privately decide which candidate best aligns with their own values. Do not ask students to share their thoughts with the class.
16. Have students return to their small groups and as a group, choose one candidate from their completed group handout to use in the next activity.
17. Explain to the class that candidates and/or their supporters will use media (commercials, ads, social media posts, etc) to highlight their candidate. They sometimes also use media to provide information about their opponent, usually in an unfavorable light.
18. Provide each group a Selling the Candidate handout and review as a class.
19. As a group, they should find favorable and unfavorable media for their chosen candidate and complete the In the Media handout.
20. After the groups are finished, ask a group representative to share their findings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *In your opinion, what is the best way to learn about a candidate?*
- ★ *If a candidate is an incumbent, how many votes did they receive in the last election? How have their views on the issues changed, if at all?*
- ★ *What are important things voters should look for in choosing the best candidate?*
- ★ *How should a voter decide which candidate to choose?*
- ★ *How does the media impact an individual's view of a candidate?*



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Take a Stand Handout

Student Name: _____

DIRECTIONS: Using the list your class brainstormed, what four issues does your group want to ask your candidates about?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Think about all the offices up for election this term and choose one. Which office will you choose?

DIRECTIONS: Visit sites as directed by your teacher and look for each of the candidates running for your chosen office. Complete the chart below for each candidate. In your own words, write the facts about each candidate's opinion of the issue.

| Write the facts of each candidate's "stance" on these issues | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Candidate Name | Political Party | Issue 1: | Issue 2: | Issue 3: | Issue 4: |
| | | | | | |
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6-8

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

I Study the Candidates
& Issues



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Take a Stand Handout

Student Name: _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Based on the information on the chart, which candidate do you think has the best solutions to each issue and why? It is ok to agree with one candidate for one issue and a different candidate for another issue.

What other information do you need to make an informed decision about a candidate? What questions do you want to ask?

6-8

ELECTIONS AND VOTINGI Study the Candidates
& Issues**Matching Candidates' Priorities**

In the Media Handout

Student Name: _____

DIRECTIONS: Find 2 types of media for the candidate your group selected. One should show the selected candidate in a favorable light and one in an unfavorable light. Answer the questions in the chart below. Media could be a website, online news, social media, video, etc.

Candidate: _____

| FAVORABLE MEDIA | | UNFAVORABLE MEDIA | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Form of media | | Form of media | |
| Summary of the content (describe the commercial, post, ad, etc) | | Summary of the content (describe the commercial, post, ad, etc) | |
| What strategies were used? (See "Selling the Candidate" handout) | | What strategies were used? (See "Selling the Candidate" handout) | |
| How did you feel after seeing the media? | | How did you feel after seeing the media? | |
| Who paid for/wrote it? | | Who paid for/wrote it? | |
| Compare the media post to your research. Is the media accurate? Explain | | Compare the media post to your research. Is the media accurate? Explain | |



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Selling the Candidate Handout

TECHNIQUES OF PERSUASION

1. **Plain Folks:** emphasizes similarities with the average citizen. ("I was born in a two-bedroom house and walked to school with my brother.")
2. **Bandwagon:** encourages the listener to do something because it's the popular thing to do. ("More and more of us want new blood in Washington, and we're voting for Jones.")
3. **Name Calling:** uses negative labels to stigmatize opponents. ("Michael Dukakis is a card-carrying liberal.")
4. **Testimonial:** shows an endorsement by a famous and respected person. ("I'm voting for George Bush," declared Ronald Reagan.)
5. **Glittering Generalities:** says little specifically but conveys emotion. ("John Jones has made this nation a better place.")
6. **Transfer:** uses symbolic images to enhance a candidate's profile. (Visits to war memorials, scenes with heads of state from other countries, etc.)
7. **Card Stacking:** presents the evidence in a partial or slanted way. ("The average income of Americans has risen every year since the election of President Jones," omitting the statistic that the income of all citizens except the top 20% has actually fallen.)
8. **Straw Man:** sets up an opponent's weak argument so that it can be knocked down. ("They believe that a 12-year-old child should be able to sue her parents, and they are wrong.")

LOGICAL FALLACIES

1. **Hasty Generalization:** bases a conclusion on insufficient evidence, usually a fractional sampling. ("Somalians don't want our help — look what they did to an American soldier.")
2. **False Dilemma:** presents only two choices when there are a variety of possibilities. ("Choose Smith and you'll get inflation; choose Jones and the budget will be balanced.")
3. **Loaded Questions:** constructs biased questions with predetermined answers. ("When did you abandon your party's platform on that issue, Senator Smith?")
4. **False Cause:** insists on a causal relationship because one event preceded the other. ("As soon as Jones was elected, congressional corruption was revealed.")
5. **Slippery Slope:** claims that one event will lead to an uncontrollable chain reaction. ("First they outlaw machine guns, and then they will take your hunting rifles.")
6. **Appeal to Emotion:** summons fear, anger, or pity to secure agreement with an argument or position. ("If we don't fight crime my way, your child won't feel safe walking the streets.")