

# Awards/Award Applications

## **Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Voter Education**

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, the League of Women Voters. **Each of these professional associations** sponsor awards for outstanding voter education projects in **conjunction** with the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

- Read Sohum Pawar's essay on "What Participating in the National Student/Parent Mock Election Meant to Me" and on his experience seeing an original copy of the Declaration of

## Award Application

### **2008 Award Winners**

**Winners of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Award, given in recognition of outstanding contributions to teaching democracy in conjunction with the National Student/Parent Mock Election:**

**Spain Park High School, Hoover, Alabama**







**Spain Park High School, Hoover, Alabama**



### **Spain Park High School, Hoover, Alabama**

**Spain Park High School** winner of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Award.

At **Spain Park High School** in Hoover, Alabama, 1136 of the school's 1361 students voted in the Mock Election. Election-related units were taught in multiple Spanish, English, art, math, economics, dance, culinary arts, business education as well as social studies.

A patriotic assembly before the election featured the school's band, dancers, singers and essay excerpts from a winner of the George Washington Honor Medal. 1400 participants wore masks, created by the arts class, depicting their preferred candidate.

Business education students created registration cards modeled after state voter registration forms. Government students performed original songs, presented original poetry, PowerPoint presentations, game shows, newscasts and participated in a constitutional hoedown

to answer student questions. Economics students reviewed the correlation between economic data (misery index, real income growth, GDP growth) and past Presidential elections to predict the likely 2008 election winner and forecast results for 2010 and 2012.

Advanced photography students designed election posters; the art department created two large murals of the faces of McCain and Obama. Pre-AP Algebra students analyzed the quadratic relationship between car speed and fuel economy to emphasize the importance of fuel economy as it related to the 2008 election. Math classes graphed population as x and electoral votes as y to determine geometric means as related to the electoral college. Others researched ages of presidents and vice presidents and tendencies related to them to determine if there was a correlation between the presidents and the vice presidents they chose. Algebra students surveyed over 200 community members per class regarding issues questions, then prepared histograms and frequency tables of the results.

Language and composition students divided into groups to research candidates and speak as "candidates" to "voters" while "media" posed questions about platforms. Ninth grade English classes researched election issues online; each student wrote a letter to the next president to try to persuade him to take the student's stance on one or more of the issues. Accounting students researched election law/regulation related to financials and then compared candidates' financial documents. The debate team presented views of candidate positions in spots broadcast via the school's TV station. AP history students held weekly current event discussions on the candidates. Social studies faculty organized and conducted the Mock Registration Drive and provided precinct captains with "official" voter lists. The dance program learned different styles of dance that represent the country, including swing, lyrical, jazz and pom, all with patriotic themes. Culinary students prepared red, white and blue foods for the Mock Election reception. Broadcast communication classes delivered live broadcasts over closed circuit TV throughout the day.

Parent participation was high for this event, beginning with the school's PTSO (Parents, Teachers, Student's Organization) providing a grant of \$500. Parents decorated "election headquarters", the lobby and the "precincts". Parent volunteers served as "precinct captains" and "election officials". One parent was surprised to see that some students who failed to register to vote lined up anyway, hoping to participate. The parent noted that those students might remember the

experience and be much more inclined to register when eligible to vote in a real election.

Spain Park High School Coordinator Cheryl Morrow added a new element to this year's Mock Election program, coordinating with the Supervisor of Elections for both Jefferson County and Shelby County to train registered-voter high school students to become paid poll workers.

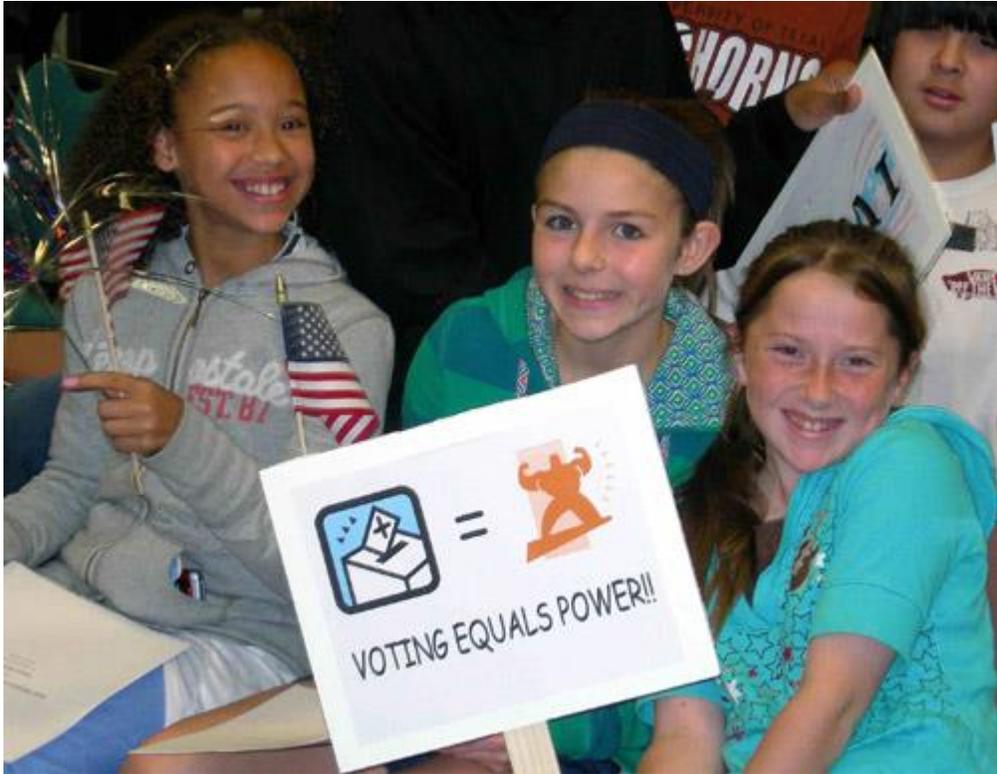
According to Morrow, "When science, language arts, foreign languages, art and math teachers integrated their curriculum to teach the electoral process, then our students began to realize how critical it is to understand politics, public policy and public purpose that underscore our social studies curriculum." Student discussions, she said, "reflected an enthusiasm that many teachers have never witnessed before in their teaching career."



### **The League of Women Voters of Oregon Pictures**



**League of Women Voters Oregon**



**League of Women Voters Oregon**



**League of Women Voters Oregon**



### **League of Women Voters Oregon**

**The League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund (LWVOREF)**, winner of the National Association of State Boards of Education award, has been a consistent National Student/Parent Mock Election award winner. The League's proven ability to continue building momentum is evidenced by Oregon's Mock Election growing voter participation levels – an increase of 130% from 2004 to 2008.

Key to the League's success is its steering committee and partnership with educators and state agencies/organizations, including the Oregon Secretary of State, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon School Boards Association, the Oregon Parent Teacher Association, the Oregon Association of Broadcasters and the City of Beaverton.

The 2008 Oregon Mock Election involved 324 schools statewide and 48,426 voters. The League's project provided a blog, curriculum materials, flyers, handouts, registration forms, a mock ballot, PowerPoint presentations, Spanish translations, large print versions, audio recordings of reference materials, age/ability appropriate materials, press releases, articles, and more. The Teachers' Guide

included a contact list of classroom speakers, resources and activities for researching and debating ballot measures and national issues, history about state and national elections, classroom exercises, discussion questions, and more. At least 16 media stories were generated on the radio, television, internet or in print throughout the state. On the League's Mock Election blog, students discussed their ideas on democratic participation, the importance of voting, voter eligibility, and the benefits and drawbacks of the Electoral College.

The 2008 Oregon Mock Election culminated with live-streaming of Mock Election Day, including a student-led press conference with a question and answer session between press and students (covered by over six media outlets). Both the Mayor of Beaverton and Oregon Secretary of State attended and spoke on the importance of voter participation.

Coordinator Krista Horning and LWVOR Executive Administrator Rebecca Smith noted that "Our prepared and state-approved curriculum, as well as the flexibility of the Oregon and National Student/Parent Mock Election programs, made it easy for teachers to incorporate these essential lessons into their curriculum...a welcome resource for teachers in Oregon..."



**Kwajalein Jr/Sr High School, Marshall Islands, South Pacific**

(courtesy Dan Adler, Kwajalein Hourglass)



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**Kwajalein Jr/Sr High School**, in the Republic of the Marshall Islands – a fledging democracy -- is located on the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll, a military installation in a multicultural setting with Anglo, Filipino, Hawaiian, Hispanic, African-American and Asian populace.

Students at Kwajalein prepared for their “Election 2008” with daily intercom announcements, an information center in the library, a bulletin board with candidate biographies, a TV/video station where students could watch taped replays of the presidential and vice-presidential debates, election-related articles from magazines, and computer stations where students could conduct their own research. Special classroom lessons included the use of websites such as [factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org). Upon registering, each student received a political

button, then answered questions about the issues to help determine political persuasion. Students produced a ten minute video of the school's presidential rally at which students role-played candidates, Secret Service agents, etc., and posted it on YouTube. Students who assumed the identity of candidates and their spouses prepared in advance, learning the mannerisms of candidates, perfecting speeches and preparing wardrobes. The island newspaper covered the story and lively discussions about "Election 2008" ensued in student's homes.

The mock election demonstrated the practice of democracy in the U.S. to Republic of the Marshall Islands students at the school. 99% of students voted. Coordinator Ricardo Fullerton noted that "The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a relatively young democratic nation. Host nation students within the school participated in the planning and developing of all activities...these young adults found themselves caught up in the election process, and were as excited as their American counterparts as the process reached its crescendo and culminated in the rally and mock election. These activities will live on as a reminder to these students as they work to grow their own democracy..." Kwajalein Jr/Sr High School is a winner of the National Association of Secondary School Principals Award.



**Desert Heights Elementary School, Reno, Nevada**



**Desert Heights Elementary School, Reno Nevada**





**Desert Heights Elementary School, Reno, Nevada**



## Desert Heights Inaugural Ball





**Desert Heights Inaugural Ball**



### **Desert Heights Inaugural Ball**

**Desert Heights Elementary School, winner of the League of Women Voters award** in Reno, Nevada began their project as a grassroots effort by enthusiastic coordinator Chrissy Stranahan. As a first-time NSPME participant, Desert Heights not only organized a successful Mock Election, but also followed it with an Inaugural Ball with 250 in attendance.

Students competed in a poster contest, created invitations inviting elected officials and candidates to participate, held dress-up days (patriotic hat day, Presidents and First Ladies day, Red/White and Blue day, Nevada Day), presented a musical performance entitled "We are Americans", hosted a presentation from the Joe Foss Institute "Veterans Inspiring Patriotism", and encouraged their parents to become part of the fun as voters on Mock Election Day.

Participation was 100%, with every student, teacher and staff member voting. In addition to parents, representatives of the Air National Guard, Police and Fire Departments, and local businesses participated to show the importance of voting. The State Treasurer, State

Controller and a candidate for Senate addressed the students about the election process.

According to Stranahan, "The real prize has been watching these students grow and learn about our nation, to feel pride in participating in the Democratic process...They are America, and I have been so proud to watch them show me what they can do."



**Winner of the American Association of School Administrators Award, given in recognition of outstanding leadership in voter education:**

**Austin Independent School District** created a Mock Election program that started early with plenty of planning and was well-coordinated throughout. Austin ISD collaborated with the Travis County Elections Division, the Texas Young Lawyers' Association (TYLA) and the Annette Srauss Institute for Civic Participation to generate enthusiasm and build momentum. The district provided a centralized hub of Mock Election information – the "Election Connection" webpage, assisted by the Instructional Technology Department, to enable 78 campuses to easily pull ballots, curriculum, planning materials and to share ideas and lesson plans.

Many innovative ideas helped propel Austin ISD's program. One teacher led his students in conducting a voter outreach program – visiting classrooms, fielding questions, and providing information. Others integrated social studies and math by having students graph their voting results. Another secured voting booths from the Travis County Elections Division, while still others called upon elementary students' parents to decorate ballot boxes in patriotic colors. Students served as mock election officials, judges and clerks. By arming themselves as well-informed "voter outreach educators", students shared their newfound knowledge with peers and helped increase participation. Post-election resources were provided online for accessibility by students, parents, and teachers. High school seniors who would be eligible voters in the national election were able to register onsite with the Travis County Elections Division. Local media ran with the story that the Mock Election was big news on Austin's campuses, and it became big news in Austin homes that over 40,000 students participated in the district-wide Mock Election.

Austin ISD coordinator Joe Ramirez noted "...in developing a program such as this, important relationships are established with outside agencies that lay the foundation for sustained commitment and support of the social studies."

**Winners of the National Association of Student Councils Award, given in recognition of outstanding contributions to teaching democracy:**

**Elvin Hill Elementary School** in Alabama started "Election '08: The U.S. Road to the White House" with a grant from their local Board of Education. The funding helped provide supplies for students, including "I Voted" stickers and t-shirts.

Elvin Hill succeeded in their goal to involve every teacher in the project and to provide materials and activities appropriate for each age group. As a kick-off to their Mock Election project, they brought the Mayor onboard during a Constitution Day Assembly -- hosted by Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) members -- who also served as voter registrars and election officials for the students.

To build up to the big event, older students had their photos taken behind a "presidential desk". Elvin Hill held a contest for students to think of a Bill they would like to see passed. The student council made posters, signs, advertisements, and decorated the school, then counted votes and displayed them on a large graph. Organizers helped place articles in the local paper and the state's largest newspaper.

As a special conclusion to Mock Election Day, the school held a Veteran's Day Program to honor local veterans for their contributions. The small town had the largest voter turnout ever on election day.

According to Elvin Hill coordinators Jenny Lespi, Mary Kay Park and Monica Harris, "We had teachers...igniting that love of history and the importance of this day in their students' minds and hearts."

For **Geilenkirchen Elementary** School in Germany, part of the challenge of the "Election 2008" project appeared to be a sense of disconnect for students living abroad in regard to elections in the states. Part of the success of organizer Cindy Gehrman was her ability to use the Mock Election project to make the presidential election relevant for students, who had little exposure to election information (TV/radio commercials, bumper stickers, billboards, etc.). Students did much of their research and preparation using materials from the internet, and often rewrote it in their own words, creating their own age-appropriate materials. Project coordinators felt that as a result, both students and parents better understood the information presented.

As part of an international community, Geilenkirchen students seemed to have more unique perspectives and considerations. They noted that "you didn't need to know how to read and write or speak English to vote" and that "US citizens who are mentally or physically challenged also had the right to vote". Special attention was paid to absentee ballots, and the importance of deadlines.

Geilenkirchen Elementary School was visited by German TV station WDR, which interviewed students on their opinion of voting, its importance and how they prepared for the election process. Coverage included communities in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Broadcasts were linked to the school's website. An article on the school appeared in *Skywatch*, the NATO newspaper representing 16 countries.

At **St. Benedict at Auburndale High School** in Tennessee, the social studies department began Mock Election planning before the semester began, brainstorming during in-service days. Primarily a student-led project, the school launched "Operation Informed Voter" with the designation of one hallway as "election super highway". Students hung butcher paper columns, each featuring a specific issue giving basic information and a message about where each party and candidate stood on that issue, based on their own research. A large map in the hallway tracked current national polling information and a tally of presumed Electoral College votes. Student subcommittees subdivided along party lines created informational booths for each of their candidates, featuring photographs, quotations, slogans, pamphlets, etc.

Students organized a debate-watching party, created political cartoons, planned weekly polls and created Facebook groups for discussion and debate outside of school. As a result of their own involvement and enthusiasm, student subcommittees inspired other students. Weekly polling results (in which voter participation steadily increased) showed students how results change with different percentages voting, which was also reflected on the Electoral College map.

Organizer Miriam Dolin was impressed with the comparison of pre-test results of questions about the voting process and specifics of the 2008 election (garnered in the first election lesson) vs. post-election results. No negative campaigning was allowed. The project focused on issues rather than platforms. Dolin noted that "Not only did the election process bring great publicity within the school community to the social studies department, but it also helped students realize the practical applications of social studies in their lives by drawing connections between political philosophies and applications in history, different historical events, and current political processes and issues."

**Cascade High School** in Everett, Washington, gathered leadership and government students as the driving force behind their "Freedom's Choice" project. Students volunteered to work for local and national candidates doorbelling, phone calling, and worked at local caucuses and primaries. They invited local officials to discuss issues with students and volunteered to work the polls on Election Day. Their preparation included creating campaign commercials, voter pamphlets, posters, newspaper articles, political cartoons, brochures and a potential fundraising calendar based on the political candidates' stance on issues. They met at school to watch the presidential and vice presidential debates together and discuss the issues.

Beginning in June before the election, students fundraised and planned their itinerary to attend the Presidential Inauguration, with 18 making the trip of a lifetime.

From promoting registration at football games to attending political rallies, Cascade High School's Mock Election culminated with their vote in actual voting booths with electronic voting machines borrowed from the Snohomish County Auditor's Office Elections Division.

Coordinator Roberta Hasstedt noted the students themselves pursued the opportunity to become first-time participants in the National Student/Parent Mock Election, organizing and planning the entire event. "Students brought home their enthusiasm," Hasstedt said, "and discussed politics with their friends, parents, and other members of the community."

**Okanogan School District** in Okanogan, Washington, approached their Mock Election project as a service learning program. Their goal, to have students reach out with knowledge and enthusiasm to encourage voting in an underrepresented population, involved many at-risk students in a community of modest means. Providing services and materials in a bilingual format was key. Students created bilingual posters, provided Spanish language voter pamphlets and manned registration tables at sporting events after first learning about the process so they could teach others. Coordinator Stephanie Davis worked closely with the Secretary of State's Voter Education and Outreach Coordinator, Amanda Meyer.

Students studied different Constitutional amendments that enfranchised different groups and realized, through voting simulation, that even a few people can decide policy that affects much larger groups. They examined registration and turn-out rates among ethnic minorities and the poor. In increasing registered voters in the county by 1%, they found they could positively impact their community.

**Vestavia Hills Elementary** in Birmingham, Alabama, boasted 99% participation in their "2008 Presidential Election Focus" mock election project. An assembly prior to voting included appearances by "Obama" and "McCain" (in masks) escorted by police detail.

Students interviewed the mayor and a councilman for podcasts and presented daily school announcements of presidential trivia and facts about major candidates. The art teacher discussed citizenship and patriotism; students made candidate posters and worked together to make a giant American Flag on cotton sheeting with painted handprints. The flag will be used at future school and community events. The music teacher taught patriotic songs and all classroom teachers introduced social studies lessons on presidents and citizenship.

Parent volunteers created an interactive bulletin board to help teach about the electoral process, and contacted community members who work at the polls for information and ideas for the Mock Election. The result: generous donations of official signs, posters, "I voted" stickers and a spread of enthusiasm throughout the community. Vestavia Hills Elementary received a recognition letter from a state congressman and was nominated for a Freedom Foundation National Award.

Vestavia Hills Mock Election coordinator Celia Stewart said "The National Student/Parent Mock Election was the catalyst for our project...we are thankful for organizations such as this that motivate school participation in worthy projects."

**Antilles High School** at Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico organized their 2008 Mock Election with the assistance of the Social Studies Department and JROTC cadets. Among their goals: to gain an understanding of the amount of planning required for an election to run smoothly, and to see how technology can be used outside the classroom in a real everyday life situation. Students were involved in all aspects of planning the event, from making flyers, inviting special guests, constructing voting booths and decorating.

The school Technology Dept. made election information available globally for military family members. Mock Election coordinator Patricia Ortiz noted that "Parent participation was at an all-time high in the Mock Election." 50 parents were involved in in-school voting and another 200 online. The Garrison Commander joined students and cast his vote. For the first time, Antilles High School registered all six of their eligible seniors to cast their vote in the national election. The base newspaper, *El Morro*, reported on the school's mock election and applauded the school for making history and the democratic process come alive for students.

**Thomas Jefferson Middle School** in Louisville, Kentucky, partnered with local ABC-TV affiliate WHAS 11 News to prepare an energetic "Election 2008" project that included the station's political reporter as moderator in the school's presidential debate and a live remote on election day at the school's polling center.

A unique feature of this project included simulated campaign funds. Each student submitted an application to apply for a campaign job – Presidential nominee, Vice Presidential nominee, campaign manager, researcher, blogger, video or print advertiser, speech writer, podcaster, treasurer, website designer or surveyor. Students voted to elect their candidates (simulating a quick primary) and each campaign was given a "\$250,000 starting budget" using "election bucks". Staff and students also gave "election bucks" to support their chosen "candidate". Campaigns spent money to produce buttons, make copies, post signs, and publish both print and video advertisements for candidates. Money was added to their budgets with each appearance as well as for selling buttons.

Students designed websites for their campaigns, created blogs and podcasts and participated in a live debate. Communications magnet students studied how the media affects the election and were responsible for the implementation of each campaign as well as the school-wide election. Coverage of Thomas Jefferson Middle School's project was featured in *The Courier-Journal* and *Monday Memo*.

Nearly 80% of the students at the school are considered at-risk according to county standards, yet Mock Election coordinator Kariane Ransdell noted that "the amount of effort these students put into this unit was amazing. Our students were so informed that we often found ourselves learning from them!"

At **Communications High School** in Wall, New Jersey, students participating in the 2008 Mock Election were encouraged to join one of eight groups: one of the four candidates' campaigns, or "527 groups", which could campaign on issues rather than candidates. These groups included the nonpartisan Common Cause watchdog group that would settle all disputes in the campaign and ensure fairness, the Election Bureau, which would run the actual election, and *the Inkstain*, a blog that would report the news of the campaign.

Students held meet-and-greets, sponsored rallies, and made "soap box" appearances, addressing the crowd while standing on a wooden platform in the front hallway. Candidates dealt with campaign finances, filing finance reports and tracking "Kleinbucks" (named for a teacher). Each group was required to raise money and make decisions on

how best to spend it to promote their causes. Funds were spent on such items as purchasing commercial airtime on the school's morning news or paying for poster space on the walls. Checks and balances were set up, enabling both candidates and voters to monitor behavior and to seek consequences for perceived wrongs committed by other candidates or other participants.

All students were required to attend a spirited debate, where candidates answered questions posed by editors of the school newspaper. Voter registration was a requirement for those students intending to vote – over 95% registered. A study of media coverage revealed that one newspaper sensationalized a particular election story while another did not. Students found that one charismatic candidate defied the odds, winning the election for Republicans when the majority of schools in the state voted for the Democratic ticket.

Coordinator Andi Mulshine found students' enthusiasm contagious. "This election project gave teachers a new perspective to teach from, another way to make history and journalism meaningful in their lives, she said. "Suddenly issues...were seen from the point of view of the teen, not the historian. It enriched all of our experiences."

**Branch Brook Elementary School** in Smithtown, NY, celebrated their Mock Election through poetry, music, decorations and an assembly featuring special guests. Speakers included Judge John Raimondi, and Edward Ehmann, Superintendent of The Smithtown Central School District.

Students dressed in shirts, ties and suits, wearing presidential rubber masks or laminated photos of all the presidents, sang "You Can Grow Up to be President".

100% of grades 3-5 participated in the Mock Election. A press release resulted in front-page coverage from both local newspapers. A parent volunteer produced a DVD of the school's assembly. According to Mock Election coordinator Lynn Kazarian, the DVD "...really reflects the efforts of an entire school to motivate everyone of all ages to vote, using technology, music, poetry, motivating speakers, humor, and school spirit."

**Clifford Findlay Middle School** in North Las Vegas, Nevada, successfully completed their Mock Election project with participation of all 1000 students, more than half of whom are "at risk". At an election rally, drama class students portrayed candidates, the Political Science Club gave speeches and the school band played patriotic music. The project focused on respect for contrasting opinions, rather than "two sports teams with a long feud getting ready for the big game".

Students learned about the issues, then completed a political party test to determine their own political persuasions. They prepared a project on the Electoral College and competed in a political hat contest.

Clifford Findlay Middle School organizer Rachel Ruttan attested to the project's success: " I have never experienced students with the excitement I've seen over the months surrounding this historical election."

At **Bloomsburg Area High School** in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, all social studies classes used curricula relating to the election and a school-wide debate was attended by the entire school. Students initiated the idea of the debate and Mock Election. Voting in the mock election, which was voluntary, increased from about 25% of students in 2004 to 56% in 2008. One goal was to get students excited about the election process, not to force participation.

Civics students tied information learned about the electoral process to examples of how that process was occurring in today's democratic society. World Cultures classes studied candidate websites and completed a compare/contrast of key stances of both candidates. Students studied the media's impact on the voting process. Problems of Democracy classes participated in an interactive election game from Cable in the Classroom.

According to Bloomsburg Area High School coordinator Dyan Murphy, students' discussion of the issues among peers increased both inside and outside of the classroom. The Mock Election program enabled students to savor the opportunity to choose to vote.

**Forest Hills School District** in Sidman, PA, ran its first *district-wide* Mock Election in 2008, after 15 years of National Student/Parent Mock Election participation. At the elementary school level, educators introduce the concept of the secret ballot; students role-played candidates and researched issues. Middle schoolers follow up with the mechanics of a secure and valid election process, including the application of media literacy to actual campaign ads. High school students focused on community outreach while registering and encouraging eligible voters to vote in the actual election.

Students developed nonpartisan voter education commercials that aired during morning announcements. This enabled them to examine the message design techniques used to persuade undecided voters. Other classes created issues posters to line the wall along food lines in the cafeteria. Students volunteered in campaigns and attended political rallies. They hypothesized the viewpoints of historical figures, such as Frederick Douglass, regarding their possible stances on major campaign issues of our time.

Students eligible to vote in the upcoming election were offered a chance to register; voter registration applications were placed in the offices of all district buildings. High school students challenged a neighboring high school to a voter registration competition at a varsity football game. Nearly 100 new voters were registered at tables set up on the football field. Students were heavily involved in the planning and implementation of all Mock Election activities.

Mock Election coordinators Jennifer Raptosh and Patrick Kovalsky described the Forest Hills project as "a continuous spiral of small steps beginning in the early years of education and continuing through graduation and into adulthood. This spiral centers on the concepts of civic responsibility, informed decision-making, and the courage to stand for what you believe."

Jennifer was an elementary school student when her now mother-in-law, Rosemary Raptosh, began the Mock Election in Forest Hills High School.

**Allen High School** in Allen, Texas organized a Mock Election Committee with representation from the library assistant/PTA Field Service representative, the student activity director/student council advisor, the academic advisor/social studies department head, the special achievement center, teachers, and the broadcast department.

History department faculty encouraged debate and campaigning; student council members served as poll workers for the Mock Election. Students were encouraged to collect data, hold discussions and campaign. The school modified the ballot and survey to fit their community. Polling places were realistic. Governor Perry sent a letter congratulating students on their participation.

Coordinator Virginia Browne reported that the 2008 Allen High School Mock Election saw voter turnout rates jump 46% over their 2004 Mock Election results.

**Inglewood Junior High School** in Sammamish, Washington, brought their first-time Mock Election project alive for almost 1000 middle-school students through what coordinators described as “a real world experience that would allow discussion on all levels of engagement”.

Organizers developed anticipatory sets and background lessons, created candidate profiles and political posters, created position papers for each candidate and helped students explore the biases present in the candidates’ own websites. Students were required to show their ASB cards to vote.

Math teachers used the statistical data to enhance lessons on fractions, ratios, percentages, and graphing. Language Arts teachers used campaign flyers in lessons on active language and persuasion. Social studies teachers used the data to compare the school’s result to the nation’s result. Inglewood plans to save the data for elections in 2010 and 2012 to build a database of results for future analysis and comparison.

According to Mock Election coordinators Adam Gervis and Gerry Lenocker “...many [students] noticed that the candidates and the media did not always fully address the important issues...and faulted the candidates for not being specific...”

100% of students present on Mock Election day voted.

**Winners of the National Association of State Boards of Education Award, given in recognition of outstanding leadership in voter education:**

**The Delaware Department of Elections** spearheaded the Delaware 2008 Mock Election with a coalition of partners including The Delaware Department of Education, The Democracy Project (University of Delaware), The Social Studies Coalition of Delaware and Delaware school districts, with support from the League of Women Voters, and the News-Journal.

To motivate students, the Delaware Department of Education created a mock election curriculum for their website in support of student achievement of Civics Standards. The instructional unit was entitled *Delaware's Mock Election*. Delaware students attended candidate events, monitored stories in the media, and used the Internet to stay informed. After voting in the Mock Election, students role-played U.S. citizens who had just turned 18, preparing a process paper, videos, exhibits, or PowerPoint presentations explaining the steps needed to effectively participate in the voting process.

Delaware created an online survey to gain feedback regarding the unit's strengths and weaknesses. A mock election convention for students at Delaware's Legislative Hall was attended by the Governor, who presented awards for participation and other recognition to schools and Mock Election coordinators.

According to state coordinator Elaine Manlove, Commissioner of Elections, "The National Student/Parent Mock Election has done wonderful things for the future of our state and our country thanks to the efforts of thousands of voters."

More than 77,000 students grades 4–12 participated in the mock election.

**The New Jersey Press Foundation** hit the ground running for their 2008 Mock Election, with comprehensive planning and with partnerships secured before school doors opened.

The New Jersey Press Foundation developed extensive curriculum materials and four editions of a website titled "Democracy 101". They prepared a flier/advertisement and enrollment form for schools, purchased and distributed tabloid newspaper supplements and a teacher's guide, pursued ongoing media coverage, and assisted schools with the voting process.

New Jersey's Mock Election advisory group included: NJ League of Women Voters, NJ Association for Gifted Children, NJ Commission on Higher Education, NJ Department of Education, NJ Department of State, NJ Education Association, NJ PTA, Skills USA, NJ Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Garden State Scholastic Press Association. These partnerships helped produce an official ballot, a list of past participating Mock Election schools, direct communication with county superintendents of education throughout the state, a mailing list of all New Jersey principals, letters of endorsement, an informational workshop for teachers interested in involving their

classes in the Mock Election, a public service announcement by the New York Giants, and a database already prepared of schools to be contacted for the 2009 Mock Election.

The depth of work done by coordinator Tom Engleman and the New Jersey Press Foundation was highly successful – enrollment of 1022 schools and a total of 286,249 students voting in the 2008 New Jersey Mock Election. For its outstanding Mock Election Project, New Jersey was one of six states winning a visit from a rare copy of the original Declaration of Independence. See the YouTube video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNqfChy6\\_ds&feature=channel](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNqfChy6_ds&feature=channel)

The **Instituto de Formacion Democratica Inc.** (IFD) in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, coordinated the Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands Mock Election under the leadership of Ramon Barquin III. This was the IFD's tenth Mock Election; almost two million participants have voted through the IFD's efforts.

Beginning with a planning group of six, the 2008 Puerto Rico Mock Election grew to include over 12,000 volunteer teachers, students and parents who coordinated the project at their individual school and colleges. Executives from multinational and state corporations became involved as facilitators and volunteers. Municipal, federal and state politicians participated, including the Governor, congressional representative and state legislature chiefs. The IFD conducted seminars at schools throughout the island (reaching out to 1877 schools) on how to conduct the Mock Election, held registration drives, and engaged hundreds of thousands of US Hispanic students and voters in campaign/registration drives.

The project enabled dozens of organizations to hold their own Mock Elections with older populations. Juvenile detention centers participated, as did organizations such as Head Start, YMCA, United Way, Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, Rotary, Freemasons and more. Media coverage was extensive throughout the event.

Election Central was held in the State Capitol, a first for any privately organized event in Puerto Rico. Politicians and experts on national issues addressed the students.

The Instituto de Formacion Democratica Inc. partnered with multiple government agencies, organizations, media outlets, and businesses. 410,000 participants voted in the 2008 Puerto Rico Mock Election. To date, the IFD has served over 2 million students in Puerto Rico, USVI and some Hispanic communities in the Continental US.

**Winners of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. Award, given for increasing parent and community participation in the Mock Election and/or in the actual election:**

**Beecher Hills Elementary School**, in Atlanta, Georgia, designed their Mock Election to encourage family/parental involvement and political dialogue with students, as well as focus the attention of the community on the political process. Students were encouraged to escort parents to the polls.

Students made signs, posters and t-shirts, wrote essays, researched candidates' history and platforms, and held voter education and registration drives. They completed projects showing how government affects their everyday lives, and wrote letters to local elected officials concerning their own issue or topic of interest. Student government officers created a Mock Election banner, Girl Scouts decorated school hallways, and Georgia Department of Labor employees and friends served as poll workers. The PTA partnered with the school to ensure a successful Mock Election on all levels, including providing refreshments and sponsoring a political poster contest. PTA members conducted registration drives at PTA meetings, PTA events, and at parent meetings and school supported activities. 65 people registered to vote or completed change of address for voter registration. Ten requests for absentee ballot applications were filled. Community partner I VOTE provided voting machine demonstrations.

Other community partners included the League of Women Voters and a local printing shop. PBA Channel 30 and Atlanta Public Schools provided media coverage. Voting literature was provided to include the dates/locations for early voting poll centers for Fulton County.

According to Beecher Hills coordinator Vernetta Nuriddin, "This project immersed the students in the election/voting process, engaging them through research, creativity and expression."

At **William Beanes Elementary School** in Suitland, Maryland, all teachers in grades Pre-K through sixth were involved in the Mock Election program. Students in grades Pre-K through 2 listed to sixth graders who role-played candidates, presenting their political platform and discussing what they would do if they were elected. Students at all levels felt they were able to influence their parents and families regarding voting and the election process.

Teachers used read-alouds, choral reading and partner reading to engage students in books and articles about the voting process. Kindergarten classes wrote sentences to answer the question "What would I do if I were president?"

William Beanes Mock Election coordinator Gina Weaver noted, "When you have a five-year-old who is able to name the candidates, the issues and explain in detail why they chose the candidate they chose...you have made a huge impact on the students and their community."

**Albany Park Community Center** in Chicago, Illinois, carried the Mock Election ideals into its own community niche, reaching out to individuals with typically low educational levels, limited English proficiency, and low socioeconomic status. Outreach to them was direct and appropriate for their language and instructional level. "Albany Park Votes!" was based in the nonprofit Albany Park Community Center's Literacy Department, which offers English as a Second Language (ESL) citizenship, adult basic education, GED and computer literacy classes for adult students.

Albany Park launched a voter registration drive focused on traditionally difficult-to-reach populations, created two levels of curricular materials on the U.S. government and presidential election process, taught lessons on voting and civic participation in 25 adult education classes, and created four bulletin boards with election-related content.

Students practiced using English to politely agree and disagree when giving opinions of the issues and candidates, held discussions of the election process, and completed reading activities from the U.S. Constitution regarding executive and legislative powers. Some classes used materials from the Illinois Adult Learning Resource Center and some wrote letters to the mayor about neighborhood issues.

One instructor received training to become a deputy voter registrar, enabling the project to register voters for the Mock Election as well as the real election. According to Mock Election coordinator Ryan Libel, "We were successful in registering both the newly-naturalized and other citizens who had moved and let their registrations lapse, or who had never voted before despite being eligible."

"Albany Park Votes!" partnered with the Illinois League of Women Voters, The McCormick Foundation, The Refugee & Immigrant Citizenship Initiative, and the Illinois Community College Board.

At **Jefferson Middle School** in Champaign, Illinois, "Responsible Citizens Think Critically" titled the school's Mock Election, led by coordinator and civics/social studies teacher Christine Adrian. Students partnered and researched election issues, determined where each candidate stood and decided which candidate best matched their own ideals.

As a required element of their election studies, students watched the presidential debates (live or taped). Using worksheets to guide their viewing, they studied how candidates use catch phrases, eye contact, and lighting to their best advantage. Students created PowerPoint presentations about their election research and became teachers to their classmates. Parents were provided access to the same resources as their children through daily homework email updates, as well as teacher webpage posts.

The student council conducted voter registrations, the technology specialist facilitated online voting, and PTSA parents helped man the "polling places" on election day, along with University of Illinois student observers. Local news agencies attended and reported on the event.

After voting, students created "Congrats Mr. President" podcasts, telling the president what they thought were the priorities for his first 100 days in office. Coordinator Christine Adrian said, "Many of my students talked about the issues at hand with a level of depth that an adult might demonstrate...a number of students would each lunch with me and talk politics. I have never had this happen before!"

**Prairie State College** in Chicago Heights, Illinois, created their Mock Election project "Lifting Student Voices for Change" as a service learning component of an Introduction to American Government course. College students worked with elementary students at Washington McKinley School, serving as role models and discussion facilitators while teaching about voter apathy, voter registration, civic responsibility and individual candidates.

"Lifting Student Voices for Change" coordinator Tiffany Bohm said, "The students from Prairie State College developed a rapport with the sixth grade students, which enhanced the learning experience about democracy in action."

At **The Oakland School** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, "Celebrate Democracy" was a new look at an old outline for the continuing success of the Mock Election at this committed high school. Organizers built upon a theory that the guiding question "was always how could we improve". With 100% participation of all students and staff members, and 10,000 door hangers promoting the vote hung throughout the city, "Celebrate Democracy" achieved its goals.

Student involvement was key in all aspects of the program planning and implementation. Staff began assisting students early, laying groundwork and preparing outlines in the Spring. The first strategy was a complete transformation of the school to a political campaign environment, including party headquarters, voting booths and areas for small-group discussions. Each participant received a personal, two-pocket folder full of information about the election process, candidates for office, electoral maps, descriptions of the campaign issues, sample voting ballots, etc. The voting was organized and conducted by a student election bureau. A judge of elections and three clerks were duly sworn in, led a successful election, and tabulated and reported voting results. Students served on host committees responsible for guest speakers. They volunteered at local party headquarters after school and on weekends.

"Celebrate Democracy" organizers utilized community resources to bring the elections to students through speakers, publications, and volunteers. Elected officials and political party representatives visited the school giving presentations. In small groups, students discussed campaign issues, candidates, and the electoral process. They created their own political parties and devised platforms of issues for them. A panel of media personalities held a town hall session with students regarding the media's role in elections. The Oakland School increased student and parent participation through announcements, newsletters, email, and invitations. Parents were enthusiastic too; they visited the school during the week to listen to guest speakers, participated in discussions, came to school to vote and helped distribute doorknob hangers.

The get-out-the-vote project was spearheaded by students; ambitious as it was. Coordinator Jack King said, "10,000 door hangers are a lot of houses. We were courageous to decide on 10,000...Mission accomplished in about four hours!"

At **Fort Bend Independent School District** in Sugar Land, Texas, Coordinator Susan Voradakis attributes much of the success of the school district's 2008 Mock Election to the power of collaboration and teamwork. Technology played an important role as well. "Social Studies teachers joined forces with technology specialists to maximize our resources and capabilities," said Voradakis, "and we experienced overwhelming success."

The Fort Bend ISD Mock Election Steering Committee formed early, beginning in January to lay the groundwork. Members included elementary and secondary social studies coordinators, Helping Teachers, members of the educational technology department, and several campus technology specialists and librarians.

Students competed in video and poster contests, participated in videoconferencing events related to the election through Vanderbilt University's Virtual School, and worked with their social studies teachers to understand elections, research candidates and platforms, and prepare for Mock Election Day.

The social studies and educational technology departments teamed up to create an online, interactive website that included resources, an online voting location, distance learning events and a database of election results. Resources included websites, documents, videos, activities and more. The Fort Bend Mock Election also served as a project that social studies and math teachers could implement and use to fulfill their Texas Technology Application requirements for teaching database and spreadsheet applications.

The local League of Women Voters provided 3500 voter guides. The graphic design department created a customized voter sticker. Several campuses were designated as early voting locations. The media supported Fort Bend ISD's project as well; The Houston Chronicle presented a feature story, the local NBC affiliate filmed and interviewed students, and community newspapers also picked up the story. Fort Bend ISD's Mock Election culminated with 53,400 participants voting.