

Dear State Coordinator,

When this Coordinator's Handbook was written in 2008, under a grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education, voting engines were not yet fully developed and state coordinators established a state Election Headquarters and counted the state's votes to report to National Election Headquarters.

For the 2 years in which our National Election Headquarters was at CNN, each state coordinator was assigned a specific time to call in their state's votes, ready or not. Votes came in at 5 minute intervals until 10 p.m. so the totals could be announced on the 11:00 p.m. news.

Now, in 2015-16, a voting engine makes it possible for us to count all the votes, all across the country, submitted on computers by individual students if desired, at once. State coordinators who prefer to have all the fun and the media attention focused on their state election headquarters are still free to do so. Schools or teachers who prefer to use paper ballots and submit the totals are equally free to do so. Coordinators who would rather the national program collect all of their state's votes are equally free to make that choice.

The National Student/Parent Mock Election has always believed in giving freedom to creativity. While there are 50 state projects plus Washington, DC and American schools all around the world, each project has been different - and each exciting for 34 years.

We hope new coordinators will use their freedom to establish the statewide project that will best meet their needs and the needs of their state.

This Handbook will tell you a great deal about what others have done. It will not tell you what you should do. There are no "thou shalt" in the National Students/Parent Mock Election. The choices are all yours.

The only requirement is your professional integrity and your willingness to work towards our mission "to light a fire in the hearts of young Americans and empower them to preserve and protect government of the people, by the people and for the people for generations to come."



The National Student/Parent Mock Election

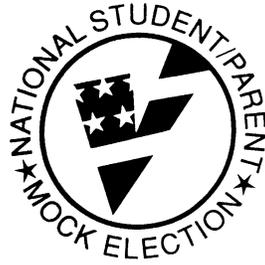
Coordinator's Handbook

The contents of this handbook were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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SECTION 1:

The National Student/Parent Mock Election



Youthful Democracy at Work through the National Student/Parent Mock Election

Over the last three decades, civic participation has decreased.¹ Four-fifths of all eligible voters under the age of 25 did not vote in the last congressional election.² Voter turnout in the 1996 Presidential election was the worst of the century. Unless this trend is reversed, and the American public is mobilized, we are in danger of jeopardizing our democracy and creating a government elected by a select few, not by the majority. History has proven the danger of this pattern: in the Weimar Republic, a small single-issue group turned out its voters and legally elected Hitler Chancellor.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose of the National Student/Parent Mock Election is to turn the sense of powerlessness that keeps young people, and their parents too, from going to the polls, into a sense of the power of participation. In what TIME Magazine called “the largest voter education project ever,” millions of students and parents experience the power of participatory democracy and learn that well-informed voting is fundamental to our democratic way of life. By educating students and parents about the power of the ballot, the National Student/Parent Mock Election believes we can transform voter apathy into action.

The Center for Action Research, at the University of Colorado, found the National Student/Parent Mock Election **REDUCED** feelings of powerlessness,³ which, psychologists point out, are the root of violence. The University of Colorado study also found the project helps young people to:

- develop political decision-making abilities,
- increase informed, and establish on-going, involvement in current issues,
- appreciate the relevance of social studies classes, and

¹ Curtis Gans, Center for the Study of the American Electorate.

² Ibid.

³ National Student/Parent Mock Election 1992: Final Report of Evaluation Findings, University of Colorado, Bureau of Sociological Research, Center for Action Research. April 1993.

- facilitate discussions of political and election topics with their parents.⁴ (By encouraging parental involvement, the National Student/Parent Mock Election facilitates adult interest and participation in the electoral process.)

We seek to help young Americans discover how, in a government "of the people, by the people and for the people," they can affect change with votes instead of violence, ballots instead of bullets. It is our hope that, through programs like the National Student/Parent Mock Election, today's violence-prone generation will discover they do not need a gun to be heard.

Through education, the National Student/Parent Mock Election believes that we can empower the youths and young voters of today. Our approach ensures that no one is excluded. We target all students from kindergarten through grade 12, their parents, grandparents and teachers, because everyone has the right to learn and everyone has a right to take control of his or her future.

Philosophy

The National Student/Parent Mock Election believes that young Americans will become enthusiastic citizens if they are allowed to "learn by doing," especially if their learning experiences involve them as full participants in the life of their community. As John Calhoun, Executive Director of the National Crime Prevention Council, has said:

Programs that give young people a stake in their communities and use the enthusiasm of youth as a resource can turn the "youth problem" on its head....

Teenagers reach adolescence earlier and earlier, and yet society does not give them meaningful roles until later and later....

We have not given our youth the opportunity to explore and integrate themselves into the social fabric they will share as adults. Refused partnership in the social contract, teenagers display a variety of symptoms that reflect dislocation and isolation....

We need to alter radically the way in which the world integrates its young people.

....teenagers are idealistic and thirst for commitment and recognition.

Society is faced with a choice. We can continue to deal with pathologies and delinquencies, treating symptoms instead of addressing the core issues. Or we can rethink and rework the attitudes and myths about adolescence. Communities, to their delight and surprise will be rewarded for defining meaningful roles for their young citizens.

⁴ National Student/Parent Mock Election 1992: Final Report of Evaluation Findings, University of Colorado, Bureau of Sociological Research, Center for Action Research. April 1993.

A History of the National Student/Parent Mock Election

Conceptual development of the National Student/Parent Mock Election began in the early 70s during a series of award-winning Congressional interviews conducted by Gloria Kirshner (now President of the National Student/Parent Mock Election) with leaders of the Senate and the House, former Presidents (Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter) and their families and former teachers. Published in *Teachers Guide to Television*, the interviews focused on the childhood experiences of these national leaders. Almost invariably, early experiences led to future careers in public service. Speaker of the House Carl Albert's Congressional aspirations blossomed at the age of six when Congressman Carter visited his elementary school. As a stringer for his Sunday School newspaper, future Senator and Minority Leader Hugh Scott was surprised (and inspired to take action!) by the "slavish obedience" he observed at the House of Delegates session in Richmond.

In 1976, NBC funded the pilot Parent Participation TV Workshop Project, created by Edward Stanley, Publisher of *Teachers Guide to Television*⁵, and Gloria Kirshner, Editor. The Workshops used television to open communication between students and parents and proved that viewing national elections on television could generate communication between the generations. In recognition of its significance, the then Commissioner of Education, Ernest Boyer, chose the Parent Participation TV Workshop Project as one of eleven nationally selected "Programs that Work" to build public confidence in the schools.

The first Student/Parent Mock Election, in 1980, began as part of the Parent Participation TV Workshop Project; two years later the National Student/Parent Mock Election became an independent project. Prior to that time, voter education projects of such magnitude and broad participation did not exist. In 1984, enthusiasm for the project continued to spread and many high-ranking officials (including Secretary of Education Terrell Bell and the Congressional Advisory Panel) became actively involved in the formation of the project. The U.S. Department of Education and Tandy Corporation became the first sponsors of the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

Now, twenty-five members of Congress serve on the Congressional Advisory Panel, which helps guide the project and suggests issues on which students and parents vote. (This vote provides the basis for the "Recommendations of American Students and Parents to the Newly-Elected President and Congress.") Senators, Representatives, Governors, Secretaries of State, State Legislators, Election Commissioners, etc. actively participate in the project, sometimes overseeing their state's projects as State Coordinators or Honorary Chairs or Co-chairs. As a governor's wife, Hillary Clinton appeared in a statewide public service announcement encouraging young people to participate in the Mock Election. She also wrote to all governors' spouses asking them to participate in the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

⁵ Edward Stanley served as Public Affairs Director of NBC for 20 years and created the first ever network television series for college credit, "Continental Classroom."

The program has expanded in both breadth and depth over time. The number of national educational, civic, religious and business cooperating organizations has more than doubled since the Mock Election first began. In 1980, only small groups of students and parents in 30 states participated in the Mock Election. In 1996, over six American million students and parents from all fifty states and fourteen countries around the world participated in the Mock Election. When it began in 1980, the Mock Election was covered only by local TV stations. In 1996, national television coverage made it possible for 20 million people to view the "National Election Headquarters."

With your help, this could be the biggest and most exciting Mock Election yet. We look forward to working with you and thank you in advance for your commitment and dedication to the project and to educating today's youth. As President John F. Kennedy said, "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education."



Photo: CNN, Inc.

-ELECTIONS:

An answer to voter antipathy

By Michael Piltman

Students who participate in this mock election are learning a lot about the power of the vote.

Toteboards, ballots, television cameras, C-SPAN, the governor coming to talk with them. It's easy to see how the millions of students who participate in the National Student/Parent Mock Election can begin to shed their feeling of powerlessness.

They've studied the candidates, the issues and the process. Maybe they've held debates, hosted candidate forums or polled their fellow students. Now it is time to vote. And, for a few, to grant an interview to television reporter Susan Rook so CNN can tell America what *they* think. Adults are actually listening to them. What they're saying and doing seems to matter.

In every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and in American enclaves around the world, two years of preparation pays off in what *Time Magazine* has called "The largest voter education project ever."

Stacks of reports document the increasing alienation of Americans from election. This alienation leads to contempt, disinterest, and poisoning the democratic environment.

In response, a grassroots sponsor has created the National Student/

Parent Mock Election. This 14-year-old program brings together thousands of volunteers to help students and parents learn the science and practice the art of democracy.

The brainchild of educational consultant Gloria Kirschner and her late husband, former NBC executive Edward Stanley, the program has blossomed since 1980 to thousands of schools in every state and around the world.

Media outlets, elementary school teachers, educational associations, and civic and political leaders all lend their talents and expertise to craft hundreds of local Mock Election programs from sprawling rural school districts to cramped urban centers.

How it works

The Mock Election works with coordinators in states and large school districts who are part of a statewide network or group. These groups include state school boards associations, secretaries of state, newspapers, the League of Women Voters and teachers with statewide contacts.

In many states, coalitions of organizations pool resources and share the responsibilities of coordinator. Wisconsin, for example, is coordinated by the Wisconsin League of Women Voters, the Department of Education, and the Wisconsin Public Television network.

To get the word out to schools everywhere, the national Mock Election works with its 53 cooperating groups and the national media to notify teachers and administrators of the program, and state coordinators work with state contacts. Governors, secretaries of state, state and national legislators and superintendents of education write letters to invite participation. The Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee have supported the Mock Election, and their former chairs have served as chairs of the organization.

As the school year begins, the election's national media sponsor develops and helps distribute teachers' guides and enrolls teachers and schools through a toll-free number. The media sponsor also promotes the program in its publications. In 1988 and 1992, *Time Magazine* provided this service and gave the program full-page ads. In 1994, Scholastic Magazine

Michael Piltman is a free-lance writer.

zines provided the materials and promotion. HBO has produced and aired public service announcements.

After getting national materials, the state coordinators, teachers, schools and school districts go to work. These volunteers seek resources to adapt the national learning tools to local needs. Volunteers might create events, give the teachers' guides a local flavor, or integrate a Mock Election into existing state civics curricula. The goal is to get students and parents into what will become a lifetime of democratic participation.

All the state preparation leads to Mock Election night and the election night headquarters where the mock votes are tallied and reported to the national headquarters. In states from Georgia to Nevada, statewide broadcasts of Mock Election results and events bring the program into millions of homes.

In addition to state efforts, a national press event is held. For three elections, a unique combination of media outlets have cooperated to produce remarkable Mock Election-night coverage. C-SPAN has aired a two-hour special. HBO has produced the event and CNN will do so in 1996. CNN has provided the on-air anchors Susan Rook and Mary Alice Williams. At the national election headquarters, cameras roll, young people with microphones interview national leaders, and students tally the votes that pour in from all around the country.

State efforts

More important than the mechanics are the ways in which the Mock Election get students and their parents interested and involved.

Under the leadership of Dr. Glenn Blankenship of the Georgia Department of Education, lesson plans were provided to every school system and to 1,200 teachers. They covered the office of governor, issues and strategies, the media and polls, election processes, and included a How-To guide for a

Mock Election. "There were 175,000 mock voters and 99 percent of the school districts participated in the election.

Texas coordinators Pat Dobbs, an economics teacher at Austin's Crockett High School, her husband Dave, the *Austin American Statesman* and KLRU (PBS) led a program that involved 700 schools and 85,000 mock votes.

Traditional civic involvement was the motivation and the method for achieving Joan and Hy Rosner's plan for the Albuquerque Mock Election. The Rosners used the Albuquerque Good Government Network as the foundation to build a model community-school partnership. The Mock Election included a televised forum attended by the candidates for lieutenant governor.

The Iowa Capitol building served as a perfect location for the 1994 Mock Election headquarters that had candidates there all night. Mary Youngerman, Newspapers in Education coordinator for the Ames, Iowa *Daily Tribune*, got candidates to join US West in donating to the cost. Mock Iowa Caucuses are planned for next year's presiden-

tial campaign.

Missouri School Boards Association Public Affairs Director Brett Ghan coordinated a program that included an educational teleconference beamed by satellite across the state.

Manchester Junior-Senior High School in Ohio included a campaign to pass a local levy to involve more schools in the Mock Election. Organizers held a parade, produced radio and newspaper ads and ran a campaign.

The success of the Mock Election program has spawned two ancillary programs. In 1993, American Happenings and its president, John Herklotz, sponsored 77 Mock Inaugural Balls, involving thousands of participants, including over 1,200 in Frankfurt, Germany.

This year American Happenings is funding ACTIONS to pilot programs in each state to implement student ideas for combatting violence. The Mock Election thus has inspired other grassroots attempts to empower young people.

For more, contact: NS/PME, Gloria Kirschner, 225W. Oro valley Rd., Tucson, Ariz. 85737, (520) 742-9943. O



Teachers and students from New York City attended the Democratic National Convention and were interviewed by CNN news anchor Susan Rook (second from right).