



Module 2: The People Who Want Our Votes

People are the cornerstone of success for any enterprise. A good school needs committed teachers, a capable administration and students who want to succeed academically. A successful professional sports franchise must have superior players, a shrewd, insightful coach and reliable ownership. Our democratic institutions, likewise, need good people to function effectively. Americans, while proud of their government, frequently hold elected officials in low esteem, according to polls that ask people to state their satisfaction with Congress and the president. In other words, a prevalent view of Americans seems to be great pride in our governing institutions but skepticism, even distrust, toward those currently holding positions in government.

This module examines this dilemma by focusing on the people running for office and their supporters. In doing so, students will come to understand the intricacies of the election cycle by analyzing recent and current campaigns and the candidates and issues involved. In addition students begin to reflect on their own political beliefs and consider how those beliefs came into being.

Much of the work of this module requires students to investigate and report on candidates either in elected office or seeking office. Depending on the interest of the teacher and the class, students can complete each of the separate investigations or the investigations can be divided into more focused and intense work by research teams.

The last lesson in this module is the **Youth Issues Agenda**. This is a class project that seeks to improve civic life or promote needed change in the community. While it is situated last in the module, it may be introduced whenever the class is ready. The goal of

the class project is for students to become agents of change in their communities. As a group, the class will identify a need, develop its goals and undertake an action plan to improve civic life in the community. The goal is to learn how a small group of individuals working together can bring about positive change.

Lesson 1: Why Would Anyone Run for Elective Office?

Understanding Goals: What makes a person run for elective office?

Introduction: Running for political office in modern America is a trying and, at times, seemingly thankless task. Political campaigns increasingly require a great deal of money that comes from either a candidate’s personal wealth or is acquired through time-consuming and sometimes demeaning fundraising. Electoral campaigns are lengthy, combative and disruptive to both candidates and their families. Individuals who choose to run for public office are scrutinized, criticized and judged. Frequently, the candidate’s private life and the lives of family members are thoroughly researched to try to find a past mistake or an alleged character flaw that might turn the election to their opponent. Running for office clearly should not be done by those who are thin-skinned or faint of heart.

Given these circumstances, exploring why people run for public office is the focus of this lesson. Students seek to determine the motivations, personal backgrounds and demographic characteristics of both those who hold office and those who have run unsuccessfully.

Time Span: 3-5 days

Resources Needed:

- Handout, Jim Kennedy, *Running for Local Office*
- Congresspedia, <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Congresspedia>, a wiki-based website providing information on members of Congress
- United States House of Representatives website, <http://www.house.gov/>
- Reports from the Congressional Research Service, which is in the open domain at openncrs.com. The report *Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile*, <http://openncrs.cdt.org/document/RS22555>, is particularly useful for this lesson
- Access to online versions of state and local newspapers. See the “Find Newspapers in Your Area” link on the *Student Voices* Web site (under “Go Local”) or visit <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>, an online newspaper directory
- (Optional) Handout: *Political Campaigns for the Newcomer: Learning the Ropes Through Local Elections*

Skill Sets: Analysis, interpretation, fluency with computer software

Performances of Understanding:

Students conduct research on members of the House of Representatives and report their findings to the class. Students then develop a profile of a possible winning candidate for Congress from their state.

Procedure:

Begin class by allowing students to read the short essay by Jim Kennedy, *Running for Local Office*. When the reading is completed, have a brief discussion with students on reasons to run for office at the local level. Work to expand the discussion into how there might be a different set of reasons for different offices. Someone seeking to serve as county supervisor, for example, may have entirely different reasons from a person running for state senate.

Next, students should compile a list of reasons why someone would run for elected office. Ask students to make an educated guess about the type of person likely to be elected in their state and congressional district. (Be sure to record these preliminary views in order to compare original class perceptions with subsequent research results.) Students then either choose or are assigned a representative to research. Working with a research partner or within a small group, students collect data on their assigned member of Congress using Congresspedia and online newspapers from the representative's district. Students can find their representative by clicking "Find Your Federal Elected Official" on the *Student Voices* Web site (under "Go Local").

The goal of the research is to develop a portrait of as many candidates as time permits. The research need not be exhaustive (one or two pages is sufficient), but students should, at a minimum, include the following: educational background, career and employment information, military experience, political experience and affiliation, marital status and children, religion and significant life events. The question of most interest, of course, is why this person decided to leave his or her prior job and run for office.. This is a more difficult question to answer, but encourage students to seek it out.

Students should share their results with one another and discuss any general trends among the candidates researched. Compare the research completed by the class to that of the full body of the House of Representatives compiled in *Membership of the 110th Congress: A Profile* by the Congressional Research Service.

The teacher may want to continue the discussion to include the nature of representation in the United States, ending with the class developing the likely profile of a successful candidate for Congress from their own state.

Information from this project should be collected onto the class wiki or blog space. The data will be a useful resource as the election and campaign process continues.

Assessments

Informal feedback on the research process and the use of resources.

Subsequent assessment should be based on 1) the completeness of the research, and 2) clarity of written work.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways:

- The Committee of Seventy, *How to Run for Political Office 2007: A Campaign Manual for Pennsylvania Candidates*, <http://www.seventy.org/public-issues/empowering-citizens/how-to-run-for-political/>. This Web site has useful information for people wishing to run for office and may provide insight to students of campaigns about the important decisions a candidate must make. Although Pennsylvania-specific, it serves as a roadmap to understanding the path of any candidate in a political campaign.
- Distribute the essay by Political Consultant Jennifer Tierney, *Political Campaigns for the Newcomer: Learning the Ropes Through Local Elections*, from the *Student Voices Reader*. After reading the essay, students should share their own views about volunteering for a campaign or as an election worker. What types of tasks did they or are they willing to undertake?

Correlation to *National Standards for Civics and Government*:

Standard V.D. What civic dispositions or traits of private and public character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?

Standard V.E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

Lesson 2: The Recruitment and Nomination of Candidates

Understanding Goals: What are the external factors that might influence a person's decision about running for elected office?

Introduction: In 2007 just 16 percent of members of Congress and 23.5 percent of state legislators were women. Yet when women run for office, they are elected at the same rate as men. Consequently, it is a scarcity of women candidates, rather than a failure of women to win the races that they enter, that has resulted in an underrepresentation of women in political office. In this lesson, students investigate the factors that encourage an individual to run for office by focusing on the specific case of a female candidate of their choosing. The role of political parties and leaders in determining candidates' qualifications is explored. Particular attention should be paid to the ways in which political parties may encourage or discourage women from running for office. Time Span: 3-5 days

Resources Needed:

- Handout: Kira Sanbonmatsu, "Women and American Politics"
- Handout: The Center for American Women and Politics, "Women in Elective Office 2008," a PDF file, is available at <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Facts.html>.
- Congresspedia, <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Congresspedia>, a wiki-based website providing information on Congress
- Information about female candidates running for public office. Useful sites include the candidate's own Web site and online local and state newspapers. Typically, candidate sites include biographical information and an overview of important issues. Local and state newspapers frequently provide information on candidates as a service to their readers.

Skill Sets: Analysis, interpretation

Performances of Understanding:

Individually and in small groups students work on the following:

- After analyzing the information in the essay by Sanbonmatsu and examining data from The Center for American Women and Politics, students develop a working hypothesis about why there are fewer women candidates than men in the United States.
- Students collectively decide on a woman candidate for study. Students develop a research plan to collect biographical information on the candidate. Research methods may include online research, reading local newspapers, contacting the candidate's campaign staff to acquire information about the decision to run for office or conducting an interview with the candidate. In devising the plan, students need to determine: 1) the best way to communicate with the candidate or staff (phone, email, personal visit, etc.), and 2) a list of questions to be answered. Students should realize that local candidates are more likely to personally interact with them. Personal interactions are least likely, of course, for national campaigns.
- Based on their interviews and/or collected data students write a collaborative essay or wiki post information on the role of political parties in their state in determining candidates for office. Students should suggest ways to increase the size of the candidate pool. Specifically, students should suggest how political parties could encourage more women to run for office.

Procedure:

Begin the lesson by providing students the essential background about women in modern American politics using the Sanbonmatsu essay and data from The Center for American Women and Politics Web site as a resource. (Alternatively, the class can be assigned the essay for homework and the teacher can lead a class discussion of the essay to highlight the key points.) Students should consider possible reasons for women's lower involvement in politics (e.g., glass ceiling theory, perceptions of lower election success, regional differences). After the initial overview of the issue, students develop a preliminary hypothesis as to why women are a minority of elected officeholders and decide on a candidate to research (either teacher- or student-selected).

Students then investigate their selected candidate. Research questions should be developed in class, but the research work can be conducted both in and out of class. Ultimately, students will be synthesizing their gathered information into a written form either collaboratively or individually to share with the class and post online.

As a concluding part of this written assignment, students should make recommendations for encouraging a greater number of women to run for elective office.

Assessments

Informal teacher feedback on the research process.

Assessment of written and oral presentation of findings.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways:

The Center for American Women and Politics, *The Effect of Term Limits on Women and Minorities*, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/Research/reportslist.html#termlimit>. The center provides research reports and articles that may be used for further research.

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, Women in Congress, <http://womenincongress.house.gov/>. This Web site is a compilation of member biographies of women who have served in Congress, as well as essays, resources for students/teachers and other historical artifacts. Interactive and highly navigable.

Correlation to *National Standards for Civics and Government*:

Standard II.C. What is American political culture?

Standard V.E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

Lesson 3: Candidates on the Issues

Understanding Goals: What makes a campaign issue important?

Introduction: After a candidate wins a nomination to office, it is time for the prospective officeholder to focus on acquiring the most votes in a general election. As though participating in an elaborate dance, office seekers and voters provide feedback to one another during a campaign on the issues and concerns of greatest importance. In this lesson students focus on how issues come to the forefront of political discussion and the role of the candidate in determining the key issues

Time Span: 3-6 days

Resources Needed:

- Handout, *What If There Were No Freedom of the Press?*
- Handout, *Candidates' Issue Positions Chart*
- Congress.org website, <http://www.congress.org>
- Access to online versions of state and local newspapers. See the "Find Newspapers in Your Area" link on the *Student Voices* Web site (under "Go Local") or visit <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>, an online newspaper directory
- (Optional) Handout: *Media Coverage of Campaigns*

Skill sets: Analysis, developing a hypothesis, interpretation, research

Performances of Understanding:

Students consider the role of a free press and the First Amendment in campaigns and the need for citizens to obtain information about candidates and issues from the news. Working in research teams, students use the Congress.org website to facilitate the collection of data on elected government officials. Each team will select one federal elected officeholder, one state officeholder and one local elected government official to research. (The Congress.org database identifies officeholders and related Web sites.) It is preferable if the officeholders are running for reelection. Students undertake online research to identify issues highlighted in the past by the officeholder. Students also identify at least one piece of legislation or a local ordinance in which each of their chosen officeholders has had extensive involvement. Students should outline a brief description of the legislation and ordinance and issues of interest.

After collecting the preliminary data, students make a prediction about the type of constituency that would support each of the three officeholders. In other words, does

each officeholder appear to be favoring a specific group or interest? Each team should try to describe in as much detail as possible a person likely to support each of the officeholders in a future election. What are the characteristics of a person likely to give a financial contribution to the officeholders in support of a campaign?

Procedure:

This lesson requires students to access data on elected officials. These data are most easily acquired by using sources available via the Internet. Students should also use the resources of the media center or library and/or try to arrange visits with officeholders or staff.

Begin the lesson with a discussion on the First Amendment:

1. Explain to students that today they will begin looking at how citizens can learn about candidates from the news media, and the importance of the First Amendment for the media to provide independent information about candidates and issues in an election.

Remind students of the text of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

2. Note that the only business mentioned is “the press” and the only institutions mentioned are “the press” and “religion.” Media provide a check on the government. The media are often a critical way for citizens to become informed about candidates. In today’s exercise, students will think about the various roles the media play and what would be lost if journalists were not able to play those roles. Discuss how and why the media are controlled in societies that are not free.

3. Hand out copies of the *What If There Were No Freedom of the Press?* chart. Have students work in pairs or in small groups to fill out the chart, thinking about what kind of information each of the media forms provides in a campaign and what would be lost if they were not able to fulfill that role. When students have finished, have them share their conclusions.

Introduce the second part of the lesson by using the search feature on the Congress.org Web site to allow students to see who the local, state and national officeholders are for the residents of the area surrounding their school. Students then select three representatives from this list, at each of the successive levels of government (local, state and federal), for further research.

Distribute the *Candidates’ Issue Positions Chart* to students. Students should use their findings to complete the chart, identifying the major issues that the candidates are discussing during the campaign and noting where differences are. These charts should be saved for reference in later lessons.

Students are to create a brief memo (or post on the class wiki or blog) on the issues most important to the officeholder based on the official’s votes, contributions received,

speeches, political literature and committee assignments. Data can be found in the 'key votes' section, the Political Action Committee (PAC) contributions section and by investigating the committee assignments of the officeholder. Students can also rely on the candidate's own Web site for information on legislation that the candidate has sponsored or voted on. Local and state newspapers can provide a wealth of information on local and state officeholders. If available, students should read any recent correspondence sent to or from the officeholder and acquire recent campaign literature.

After collecting and analyzing the data, students predict the voting constituency that supports each of the three officeholders. The officeholders' voting records should be used as evidence. Each team should try to describe in as much detail as possible the people who are likely to support each of the officeholders in a future election. This should lead to further reflection on those individuals or groups who are most likely to give a financial contribution to the officeholder.

Assessments:

Students present their findings to class. Written work is read for quality and depth of research on officeholders and for the analysis of the officeholders' likely supporters.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways:

Distribute the *Media Coverage of Campaigns* handout. Students should either for homework or over the course of the next few weeks pick several news sources and monitor the coverage of the election and candidates' issue positions. Students should pay attention to how the media is handling issues that appear on their Youth Issues Agenda (see Lesson 6 of this module) and share their findings with the class.

USA.gov, <http://www.usa.gov/index.shtml>, is the U.S. government's official Web portal providing U.S. government information and services to the public. The portal can be used to identify the home pages of local and state governments. Links to email addresses, postal addresses and phone numbers of elected officials at all levels is also available. Students may choose to write letters or emails to incumbents running for reelection.

Correlation to National Standards for Civics and Government:

Standard I.A. What is politics?

Standard II.B. What are the distinctive characteristics of American society?

Lesson 4: What Issues Are Most Important to You?

Understanding Goals: What makes a campaign issue important?

Introduction: Campaign issues also may originate from the interests of voters. Individuals, interest groups and single-issue groups may highlight an issue that they would like government to address. Successful politicians must have a good ear for the public’s concerns; otherwise, they will soon find themselves voted out of office. Consequently, issues debated in a campaign may come from the concerns and views raised by the public at large. In this lesson, students are asked to identify issues that matter to them in the upcoming election and to develop an approach to making their issue or concern heard.

Time Span: 3-5 days

Resources Needed:

- Congress.org, <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/issuesaction/soapbox/>
- Project Vote Smart, <http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm>

Skill sets: Analysis, interpretation, research

Performances of Understanding:

As a class, students choose an issue or issues of particular interest. Potential issues of interest for students can be located in the “Soapbox: Raise an Issue” area of the Congress.org Web site and the “Issues Positions” area of the Project Vote Smart site.

Once students have settled on their issue or issues of interest, they need to undertake their own personal research on the topic. The goal of the research is to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of the issue, including who has the power to create change on the issue and which budgets affect the issue. Students will then be asked to reflect on this research, enabling them to effectively articulate their own views to others. Students write a short position paper (two to four paragraphs) to post on the class blog or class wiki.

Students then work with a partner or in a small group to undertake research on the views of selected candidates on their issue. If the candidate selected to research is an incumbent, it is possible to obtain information on how that individual has acted on the issue in the past. Project Vote Smart collects ratings undertaken by special interest groups on members of Congress. Though biased due to the orientation of the special interest group, these special interest group ratings can be a useful place to begin research (Look for the link “Interest Group Ratings” on Project Vote Smart). The Congress.org site can facilitate access to incumbent websites. The Web sites of challengers can be found by using a search engine. Based on this collective research,

students post a short report to the class blog or wiki on the known views of the candidates on their chosen issue or issues.

In groups, students should develop user-generated content (a blog post, presentation, poster, video posted online) in support of their position with the goal of persuading voters and the candidates to the students' stance on the issue.

Procedure:

Students are organized into research teams and then conduct research using the guidelines outlined in this lesson's Performance for Understanding. The goal is for students to collaboratively develop and convey their views on a political issue of interest.

Students apply their insights about an issue to the positions and votes of candidates. Students' discoveries of the views of candidates on the issue are shared with classmates. Ultimately, students develop their own political advertisement in support of an issue. This user-generated content should highlight both the importance of the issue to the public at large and the views of one or more candidates. Students have creative license in developing the "advertisement." Possibilities include a political poster, a series of blog posts, a 'radio' spot in the form of a podcast, or a video for posting online to YouTube or a similar video-sharing service.

Assessments:

All of the class should comment on the student advertisements created. Teachers will focus on the amount and quality of the research conducted.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways/Optional Activities:

Access to online versions of state and local newspapers. See the "Find Newspapers in Your Area" link on the *Student Voices* Web site (under "Go Local") or visit <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>, an online newspaper directory

New York Times Online, <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html>, provides national and limited local and regional political information. Most content is free and readily accessible, although free registration may be required.

Washington Post.com, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>, provides both national and regional political news. Access is free but requires a valid email address and password.

Optional Activities

1. As a class, students create a class concept map to come up with specific issues that make an impact on their own lives. In small groups students examine news articles from past, recent and upcoming elections to identify the key issues being addressed in the media. Students then compare these issues highlighted by the media to their class concept map and attempt to explain any discrepancies between the two. Check out the issue-searchable news archives on the *Student Voices* Web site.
2. Students construct a persuasive argument in favor of a local community member

running for an office of the students' choice. Through research and possibly an interview (in person, over the phone or via email), students formulate a cohesive case about why their person of choice would be appropriate for a particular office. Their position paper should include the following elements:

- a. Community member's qualifications
 - b. Community member's positions on issues of importance to the student (to be discussed and chosen in class)
 - c. The specific duties of the office for which the student would like the community member to run
 - d. Why the student chose this community member
 - e. The similarities or differences between the person holding the position currently and the student's chosen community member
3. Students identify their own personal strengths and weaknesses and write a brief memo on the political office or position that most appeals to them. In this memo students should describe the additional skills or education they would need in order to attain that position. Each student should also be sure to state why a position is a good fit for him or her.

Correlation to *National Standards for Civics and Government*:

Standard I.A. Why are government and politics necessary?

Standard V.D. What civic dispositions or traits of private and public character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?

Lesson 5: How Are People Who Hold Public Office Influenced by the People Who Supported Them in Their Candidacy?

Understanding Goals: How do individuals and special interest groups influence issues raised in campaigns and the decisions of elected officials?

Introduction: In a representative democracy the relationship between a person seeking elective office and the voters who will determine by ballot those who will make rules and policies for them is complex and mutually sustaining. This understanding goal focuses on students exploring the relationship between officeholders and those who financially support them.

Time Span: 2-3 days

Resources Needed:

- OpenSecrets, <http://www.opensecrets.org/>, a project of The Center for Responsive Politics, a non-partisan, non-profit research group based in Washington, D.C. that tracks money in politics and its effect on elections and public policy.

Skill sets: Analysis and interpretation of financial data

Performance of Understanding:

This lesson is designed to help students see the connection between a candidate’s campaign platform, voting trends in office, and the financial contributions from outside sources. Students visit the Open Secrets Web site (<http://www.opensecrets.org/>) armed with information about a chosen candidate or elected official (voting record, bills sponsored, etc.). Students analyze data to spot connections between the information they have found about that candidate and the money the candidate has received. The site provides information on who has donated to the candidate or elected official (by interest group and sector). Students will be comparing these contributions to legislation in Congress and the candidate’s voting record on these issues.

Procedure:

Students will utilize data collected in previous lessons about specific candidates, either those currently in office or those running for election. Any of the candidates researched by students to date may be used for this lesson.

Begin the lesson by having students become familiar with the Opensecrets.org website. At present, scrolling down “The Basics” tab to the “About the Site” link will lead to a “tour the site” feature that provides a quick overview of the site. After students have had a chance to familiarize themselves with the site organization and navigation, they will

research their selected elected official(s) or candidate(s) to see if any connections can be observed between contributions, voting record and stance on a particular issue. Students also may want to revisit the person's Web site to see if any correlation exists between the money received and the prominence of his or her views on a given issue. The goals of this research are finding answers to the following types of questions:

- What industries, groups or individuals provide the greatest financial support for the candidate?
- Does the candidate serve on committees or sponsor legislation that is of interest to the financial supporters?
- What is the candidate's personal wealth? Is this relevant to the candidate's public service?
- Examine races held in your state in 2006. What percentage of winning candidates also received the greatest amount of contributions?

After conducting research, students should share and/or post findings in the class wiki or blog or through class discussion.

Assessments:

Teachers undertake a formal assessment of the research conclusions of students by examining the quality of the research and the analysis by students of the associations between the candidate and his or her financial backers.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways:

Capital Eye, <http://www.capitaleye.org/>, and FEC Watch, <http://www.fecwatch.org/>, are satellite sites of OpenSecrets.org. These two Web sites provide additional information about elections and campaigns. Capital Eye works to further trace out the flow of monetary expenditures in political campaigns, while FEC Watch monitors the enforcement activities of the Federal Election Commission and other government entities, including the Department of Justice and congressional ethics committees, and encourages these entities to aggressively enforce campaign finance, lobbying and ethics laws.

Correlation to *National Standards for Civics and Government*:

Standard I.A. What is politics?

Standard II.B. What are the distinctive characteristics of American Society?

Standard II.C. What is American political culture?

Lesson 6: Youth Issues Agenda

Understanding Goals: How can a small group of individuals improve civic life in their community?

Introduction: At the heart of the *Student Voices* curriculum is a class project that seeks to improve civic life and to promote needed change in the community. The lessons provided so far have sought to help students practice using their own analytic tools, to make the class aware of valuable online resources and to suggest possible ways for students to make their voices heard using modern technologies. Students should now set their sights higher and work to be agents of change.

As a group, the class will identify a need, develop its goals, and undertake an action plan to improve civic life in the community. Work on the project will continue over the rest of the semester. There are many possibilities. The *Student Voices* Web site provides examples and videos of previously completed student work and provides links to communicate with other students. In the Speak Outs section, students will also be able to discuss current issues with their peers across the country in online issue forums.

Resources Needed:

- Handout: *Evaluating Our Community*
- Handout: *Obstacles and Strategies*
- *Student Voices* Speak Outs, <http://student-voices.org/SpeakOutList.aspx?LocId=1000>
- (Optional) Handout: *How to Create a Voter's Guide*

Time Span: Until completion

Skill sets: Collaborating with others, analyzing issues, developing an agenda, implementing a plan of action

Performance of Understanding:

Students collaboratively design and carry out a group project that enhances civic life, broadly conceived, within their community.

Procedure:

When students are comfortable with the goals of this curriculum and at ease with the online resources that enhance research and the modern technologies that facilitate communication, introduce the Youth Issues Agenda.

The first task for students is to identify the issue project they wish to undertake. The

class may find the *Evaluating Our Community* handout useful in thinking through community needs and options for action. Students should have access to the *Student Voices* Web site to see what other groups have done previously. This may help spark their ideas and creativity. They should also be encouraged to use the *Student Voices* Speak Outs frequently. To obtain the password, which your students will need to submit their comments in these moderated forums, email studentvoices@asc.upenn.edu. Make sure to include your school name, contact information and courses taught.

Once consensus is reached on the goal for the Youth Issues Agenda component, students need to devise a plan of action. The *Obstacles and Strategies* handout should be made available to all students.

First working in small groups, students brainstorm different ways to approach the project and report back to the entire class. The entire class then engages in an evaluation of the suggested approaches seeking to find the most workable methods and tactics. Students then work together to devise the plan of action.

Tasks need to be assigned to individuals and groups and a timeline for completion must be developed. Periodically, time is given to work on the Youth Issues Agenda items. The class wiki may be used to assist in describing the goals and reporting action items.

Assessments:

Both students and teacher should complete a final evaluation of the project. Items to be evaluated include: development of a sound action plan, implementing the identified goals and the impact of the project on civic life.

Complementary Materials/Other Pathways:

One excellent Youth Issues Agenda project would be to have students develop a Voter's Guide on Candidates' Backgrounds and Positions on Issues to display in a brochure or on a Web site. (See *How to Create a Voter's Guide* handout for tips.) Students will compile their research on the issues, the candidates and the election system to create a document that can aid potential voters in their communities. Think about having students translate the guide into other languages, if such a guide would be helpful to residents of the community.

Correlation to *National Standards for Civics and Government*:

Standard V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

Standard V. A. What is citizenship?

Standard V. B. What are the rights of citizens?

Standard V. C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?

Standard V. D. What civic dispositions or traits of private and public character are important to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy?

Standard V. E. How can citizens take part in civic life?