

Civics Class Election Project

By Mari Jo Mulligan

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What better way to start a high school Civics class than to run a Presidential Primary Campaign for the 2008 election? That's exactly what happened in Mr. Brueckner's Civics class at the Round Table Program.

One of the challenges all teachers face today is how to make learning relevant while meeting the required Arizona State Standards. Mr. Brueckner found a way to incorporate not only history standards, but reading and writing standards as well. He chose to teach students about the presidential election in a way that led to not only high student engagement throughout, but perhaps most importantly it resulted in a group of students who couldn't stop talking about the 2008 presidential candidates.



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The project began by dividing the class into groups of three. Each student was held accountable for a piece of the end product which was to create a speech and posters to support their candidate's views on the current issues. To do this, in-depth research was completed to ensure students had accurate information for their assigned candidate. Research was focused on the candidates' views on



Greg Breuckner

a plethora of issues such as energy, immigration, the war in Iraq and health care.

As the students began learning about their candidate's political views, interest began to increase. It became common to hear students discussing the candidates before and after school, trying to convince others that their candidate was the one to vote for. The students knew their goal was to get the rest of the students on campus to vote for their candidate. To accomplish this, students created pamphlets and book marks to hand out in favor of their candidate. Pins and other campaign propaganda began to appear as well, in hopes of gaining votes.

Election Day arrived. You could feel the excitement throughout campus as the political groups worked their way through each class presenting their speeches and posters. The students listening to the speeches were held accountable for taking notes throughout the process so they would have the information needed to make the most educated decision before casting their vote.

After all ballots were counted the winner was Senator Hillary Clinton.

In the midst of high stakes testing and standards based education, teachers are still able to teach the state standards while making learning relevant and fun. Just ask a few students from Mr. Brueckner's Civics class.