

Student Vote

■ by Johanna Brand

They were deeply involved in the federal election. They met the candidates. They researched party platforms and positions. They argued and debated. Then they organized an election and voted.

But, though they probably know more about each party's position on the environment than most of us, their vote did not affect the election outcome.

Nevertheless the kids in Christina Huang's grade 5 class at Finch Public School thought the whole thing was "a good experience."

The class took part in the parallel election coordinated by Student Vote Canada, an organization dedicated to "building students into citizens, one vote at a time." The organization provides teacher resources for this hands-on activity, including curriculum resources for elementary students. It distributes to all Ontario schools *You Choose*, the curriculum ETFO created in 2004. (See curriculum insert.)

Huang's students ran a full election. She divided her class into four groups, one for each major national party. The students campaigned for their party. And they learned how to run an election, serving as returning officers, poll clerks, and scrutineers.



"I was surprised about how much there is to learn and about how much thought and focus goes into the party's platform," said Sergey Sapelnyk.

For Christina Huang, having her class take part made natural sense. Huang herself grew up in a political family but the effect was to make her "resist active involvement in politics."

Until, that is, she took part in the Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, which "was amazing, the best professional development I've ever had." Each November the program brings together 70 Canadian teachers for a week on Parliament Hill.¹

The student vote election got Huang's class equally excited. During their campaign three of the four candidates in the Willowdale riding – Jim Peterson (Liberal), Rochelle Carnegie (NDP), and Sharolyn Vettese (Green Party) – took time to visit the school and answer questions about their positions. This was a highlight that taught students about the power of personality and personal contact.

"I changed my mind after seeing each candidate," said Annie Shi. "When someone comes in you are sympathetic to them, until you see the next person."

She was not alone. "At the beginning I thought the Conservative Party would be the most suitable for me," said Ross London. "But after I met the Green Party I decided it was more suitable."

The debate didn't stop when students left the class. Dinner table arguments were common. "We disagreed a lot," said Annie Shi. "In the end my parents said you make your own decision."

The project could well have lasting impact for these students. According to the Canadian Council on Learning, these students will be more likely to vote when they grow up.

In its paper *Falling Voter Turnout: Is It Linked to Diminished Civics Education?* the CCL points out that civics education correlates positively with higher voter turnout at election time, particularly among those who are not inherently interested in politics.² ✓



1 See www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/education/teachers.

2 See Lessons in Learning at www.ccl-cca.ca/english/resources/carnet.asp

Student Vote: Election Day

■ *Written by*

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Overview:

In order to raise their civic awareness for political participation, students need to understand the election process and have an opportunity to participate in a simulated election.

Purpose:

Students will participate in a federal, provincial or municipal election in conjunction with Student Vote.

Curriculum Expectations:

Language: Reading (Grade 5)

Overall Expectations:

- read a variety of... non-fiction materials for different purposes

Specific Expectations: Vocabulary Building

- use specialized terms in different subject areas, as appropriate



Language: Oral and Visual Communication (Grade 5)

Overall Expectations:

- communicate information, explain a variety of ideas and procedures, and follow the teacher's instructions
- ask and answer questions on a variety of topics to acquire and clarify information

Specific Expectations: Use of Words and Oral Language Structures

- use appropriate words and structures in discussions or classroom presentations

Social Studies:

Canada and World Connections: Aspects of Government in Canada (Grade 5)

Overall Expectations:

- identify and describe the electoral process

Specific Expectations: Understanding Concepts

- demonstrate an understanding of how governments are elected in Canada
- identify current political leaders (local, provincial, and federal)

As part of Student Vote, we are encouraging you to get the whole school involved in this election.



Materials:

LM4.3.1 Roles of Election Officials Handout

LM4.3.4 Election Ballots
Pencils, pens

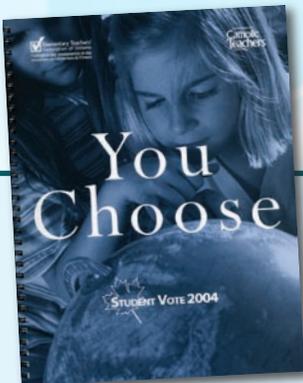
LM4.3.2 Voter Information Card (adapted from Elections Canada)
Voters List (prepared by returning officer)

LM4.3.3 Vote At Poster

Lesson Outline:

1. Lead students through the process of voting in an actual election, from ensuring their names are on the voters list to casting their ballots:
 - a. Draw up the voters list according to the school's involvement. Students will need to use a class list for each class participating. Draw a line through the names of any students who will not be present on election day.
 - b. Determine the time and place of the vote.
 - c. Prepare the voter information cards.
 - d. Prepare the ballots using the names of the candidates in the school riding.
 - e. Review the procedures for election day.
 - f. Set up one or more polling stations.
 - g. Distribute LM4.3.3 **Vote At Poster** around the school well ahead of time.
2. Assign students roles and discuss what the various jobs entail. (See LM4.3.1 **Roles of Election Officials**)
3. Hold the election, using the Student Vote 2004 Kit.
 - a. Count the ballots and record the results on tally sheets.
 - b. The returning officer announces the results.





Resources:

The following professional resources:

Canadian Government: Grades 4-6. Demetra and Renee Perry-Watson Georgopoulos (2002). London, Ontario: GeoWat Innovative Teacher Publishing Inc.; ISBN:1-89452711-9

www.elections.ca

This bilingual site has a youth link that contains a game and an election kit. A CD can also be ordered through this site.

www.kidsvotingcanada.com has all you need to know about participating in Student Vote.

Teacher Notes:

If there is no election taking place during the year (federal, provincial, or municipal), there are several issues which could serve as the basis for an election. For example: the abolition of the monarchy, the reform or elimination of the Senate, the separation of the country, environmental issues, Aboriginal self-government. Some of these issues are appropriate for Grade 5 students, while others are more suitable for an older age group.

Home Connections:

Teachers may ask students to talk to their parents and family about the election, the issues, and whether they will vote. Students need to understand that the election is an invaluable way for people to show their civic duty. They should also understand that party positions influence how people vote.

Teacher Reflections:

What worked well during the teaching of this lesson? What would you change if you were to teach this lesson again? Do you have any ideas for extensions to this learning activity or have you come across any additional resources worth noting?

(To fill out as follows)

Voter Information Card

Student Name: _____

This notice will confirm that your name has been included in the list of electors prepared for the pending election. You must vote in the school.

POLLS ARE OPEN ON ELECTION DAY FROM _____ (fill in)

ELECTORAL DISTRICT _____

The name of your electoral district

Poll Number	The Polling Place Will Be at or Near	
The Poll Number	The Address	This space left blank

Roles of Election Officials

The Returning Officer:

- Draws up the voters list, which includes everyone who is entitled to vote
- Prepares the ballot listing the candidates in alphabetical order

The Deputy Returning Officer: (one for each polling booth)

- Hands out the ballots to the voters
- Counts the ballots after the polling station has closed

The Poll Clerk: (one for each polling booth)

- Crosses out the names of the voters as they vote
- Tallies the ballots counted by the deputy returning officer

The Scrutineer: (several – one for each party at each polling booth)

- Party representatives observing the voting process
- Present, as observers only, during voting and counting of ballots

Vote At Poster

STUDENT VOTE

VOTE TODAY

Date:

Room:

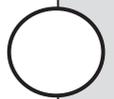
Time:

BALLOTS

BALLOT CARD

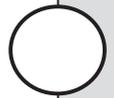
PARTY NAME: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____



PARTY NAME: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____



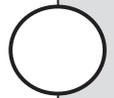
PARTY NAME: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____



PARTY NAME: _____

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____



BALLOT CARD