



Mock Elections

Duration: 4(ish) hours | **Overview:** Facilitate a mock presidential election in your classroom in which students take on the role of candidates running for President of the United States in a contemporary context.

Steps:

1. Select a date and your electorate: choose a date and invite other classes to watch your mock debate.
2. Assign roles.
 - a. The candidate: Represents their team at the mock debate. Prepare opening and closing statements.
 - b. Foreign policy, social policy, and domestic policy experts: prepare answers to relevant debate questions on behalf of their candidate.
 - c. Campaign manager(s): analyze voter data and prepare a report for their candidate. Where is the candidate aligned with the public? Where are they in opposition? How can they use this data to adjust their debate strategy?
 - d. Communications director(s): create campaign ads to share in school-approved formats (posters, videos, social media mockups).
3. Preparation: students spend at least four hours preparing for their debate. Students should be working collaboratively across roles; while each student has an assigned role, they communicate with one another on their strategies.
4. Debate Day:
 - a. Choose students to serve as moderators, or serve as the moderator yourself. The moderators will ask the debate questions and enforce the debate rules.
 - b. Set up "Voting Booths." You may use paper ballots or an electronic voting system.
 - c. Have both the audience and your class vote for president.

Adaptations:

The mock debate structure works beyond contemporary elections when you adapt the roles and context. For example, you can use historical elections –with professional judgement– to have students deeply analyze the issues at hand throughout history.



Why this works: Each role contributes a different lens—policy experts focus on substance, campaign managers analyze public opinion, and communications teams consider how ideas are presented—which helps students understand how complex democratic processes actually are. Preparing for a public debate also raises the stakes in a productive way; students collaborate across roles, anticipate questions, and refine arguments based on evidence and audience response.