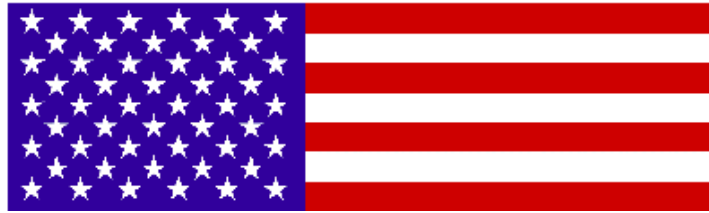
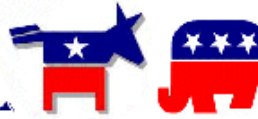


**PLANS
AND
PREPARATIONS
FOR THE
PROJECT**

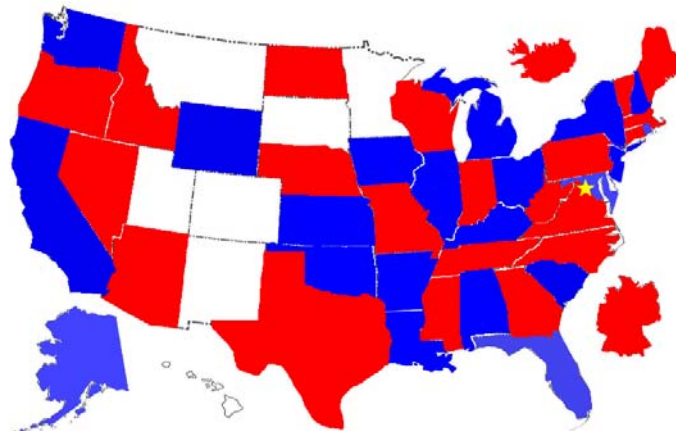
**2004
NATIONAL
CYBERCONVENTION**



Welcome to the new school year! You are no doubt by now gearing up for the return of students and the launching of our project. I am very excited to sponsor this opportunity to immerse students in the electoral process! Please save this document for future reference. It is a great guide to help you plan ahead for participation in the 2004 National CyberConvention.

As you know, each week I will send you an emailing with a topic, links to Web-based resources, and ideas for both elementary and secondary classroom implementation. The project itself is built on a very loose structure so that each participating teacher can build upon it as he or she sees fit. You can do as little or as much as you like each week. The minimum amount of participation is to discuss the weekly topic with your class, come up with an answer to the question presented in the weekly topic, and email your answer to me at walter@surfaquarium.com. Data gathered from weekly answers across the country will be posted on the project web site.

At the other end of the continuum, teachers may opt to transform their entire classroom into an election headquarters in which students study the candidates, issues and polling trends across the curriculum for the ten weeks of the project. Many classrooms will fall somewhere between these two examples - the choice is yours. There is no one right way to help your students benefit from this opportunity!



Once the project is underway, the weeks will move along quickly, so preparing ahead of time for activities you would like to implement as part of project participation is a good idea. Here are some ideas you may want to begin planning for now, before the project begins:

- Consider the role you would like the project to have in your weekly plans and plan accordingly. It is recommended you block at least 30 minutes a week for minimal presentation in the project (discussion and response to weekly question). Beyond minimal participation you may wish to consider:
 - Inviting in local resource people to speak/work with your class
 - Working with your local newspaper, radio station or television station to publish/broadcast student opinion pieces about the election
 - Using political cartoons as springboards for discussion
 - Planning class debates on issues and/or candidates
 - Allowing students to form/join classroom-based campaign committees for specific political parties or candidates
 - Creating pins, buttons, posters, banners and other kinds of campaign paraphernalia
 - Holding a CyberConvention campaign rally in your classroom prior to our project vote
 - Writing persuasive letters on pertinent issues to local, statewide and/or Web-based media
 - Conducting polls and surveys in public areas of your school or community
 - Creating, rehearsing and filming original campaign ads that make use of persuasive techniques
- Make sure you have identified an email account you want to use for reporting class answers to weekly questions. If you do not want to use your personal email account, you can set up a separate account just for this project.
- Create a project sign or banner to display in your classroom to help set the tone for the project. I will send you a read-to-print 8½ X11 image you can use, if you like.
- Identify good state sources for elections information – specifically state polling numbers on candidates and issues. This may be a news organization or your local campaign headquarters for the major parties.
- Gather materials your library may have on the electoral process. The electoral college and your state government.
- Gather news clippings on each party's convention and each candidate's campaign efforts over the summer. These may be actual hard copies of news items or archived news items found online.

- Invite workers from your local campaign headquarters to speak on behalf of their party's candidates.
- Contact local elected officials and invite them to come and talk to your class about important state issues. (Note: officials up for election may be easier to get to come to your school than you think – they love the PR!)
- Contact a local newspaper and arrange to have a reporter come to your classroom to discuss election coverage with your students. This person may also be willing to feature a story about your class's work in studying the elections in your local paper.



Based on feedback I have received from teachers in the project, I have modified the weekly topics according to the following timeline:

Week of September 7, 2004	Rollcall of States from across the Nation
Week of September 13, 2004	Topic: Presidential Candidates
Week of September 20, 2004	Topic: Popular Vote versus Electoral Vote
Week of September 27, 2004	Topic: Congressional and Senatorial Candidates
Week of October 4, 2004	Topic: Media Literacy
Week of October 11, 2004	Topic: Defense
Week of October 18, 2004	Topic: Economy
Week of October 25, 2004	National CyberConvention Vote
Week of November 1, 2004	View National Election Results
Week of November 8, 2004	Compare National Election Results with our Predictions

Let's look at each week more closely.



September 7-10: Rollcall of States from across the Nation

This is an icebreaker activity which allows each class to celebrate their participation in the project. From September 7th through the 10th classes are incited to email me a message announcing their participation as delegates to the 2004 National CyberConvention. This can simply be a quick email touting the pride of representing your home state, or a more detailed message sharing your classes hopes and aspirations for this project and the upcoming election.

You may compose the message yourself on behalf of your class or have your students compose the message. I would encourage you to review the message before it is sent. The messages will be posted as is on the rollcall pages on the project web site <<http://surfaquarium.com/NCC/>>, so please decide ahead of time if you don't want to include full student names, or if you would like to include specific information about your class, school or community.

You are also welcome to include a digital picture of your class with your roll call message. This is not required, but you have the option. It can be a photo of your class, your classroom at work, your school, or any other image which you would want to share with other delegates from around the nation. Pictures will certainly add to messages shared with other classes!

However you decide to compose your rollcall message, be sure to let your students know when you are sending it to the project to heighten the sense of participation in the project community. You may even choose to let them watch you send off the email.

Once you have sent your rollcall message, please allow 24 hours for me to post the message online. It will most likely not take that long, but as a rule of thumb please allow me a day's time. Therefore, the earlier in the week you send your message the better! Be sure to allow time for your students to check the project web site to view their own message and the messages of other classes from your state and other states around the country. You may wish to contact teachers from other classrooms in your state to share ideas and collaborate during the project!



September 13–17: Presidential Candidates

You and your students will have the opportunity to look at the major presidential candidates and consider their qualifications to be President.

Question for the Week: *Which candidate is leading in your state's or school's polling?*



September 20-24: Popular Vote versus Electoral Vote

Your class will examine the difference between the popular vote and the electoral vote.

Question for the Week: *How many electoral votes would each candidate for President receive from your state if the election were held today? (You may use last week's polling numbers to determine these figures).*



September 27 – October 1: Congressional and Senatorial Candidates

You and your students will have the opportunity to look at your state's candidates for the senate and house. You may wish to include candidates for governor if your state is holding a gubernatorial election as well.

Question for the Week: *Which candidates for congress are favored to win your state elections? (Use state or school poll numbers.) Do you feel that these projected winners can help their party's presidential candidate win your state? How? Why?*



October 4-8: Media Literacy

Your class will explore claims candidates make in campaign advertising and learn common strategies campaigns use to influence voters.

Question for the Week: *Which candidate do you feel has the most fair and honest campaign advertising? Which candidate's advertising is more effective?*



October 11-15: Defense

Your class will consider which candidate's ideas about national defense most closely match their own.

Question for the Week: *Which candidate do you feel can best provide for our national defense?*



 **October 18-22: Economy**

Your class will consider which candidate's ideas about the economy most closely match their own.

Question for the Week: *Which candidate do you feel can best provide for our economy?*

 **October 25-29: National CyberConvention Vote**

Each class participating in the project will cast their delegate votes for the Presidential candidate of their choice. Popular and electoral voting results will be shown online on the project web site.

Question for the Week: *Who is best qualified to be our next President?*

 **November 1-8: Analysis of Election Results**

Your class will examine the results of the election and infer the decision the voters have made about our country's priorities for the next four years.

Question for the Week: *What surprised you about the election results? What didn't surprise you?*

 **November 11-15: Comparison of Election Results**

Your class will compare the results of the elections with the results of our CyberConvention vote for similarities and differences.

Question for the Week: *How well did our CyberConvention vote predict the results of the election?*

Walter McKenzie
Sponsor, 2004 National CyberConvention
walter@surfaquarium.com
<http://surfaquarium.com/NCC/>