Objectives

Students explore the political process in the United States and encourage each other to become more engaged in a classroom election.

Students create campaign posters, banners, signs, and/or buttons to help convince their classmates to support their candidacy for class office or an issue upon which the class will vote.

Multiple Intelligences

Interpersonal
Intrapersonal

What Does It Mean?

Balance: both sides of a design have the same visual weight

Emphasis: stress or importance

Proportion: relative size between two or more objects

National Standards

Visual Arts Standard #5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others	**Social Studies Standard #6** Power, Authority, and Governance—experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
	Health Education Standard #8 Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Background Information

Political posters and buttons are part of election campaigns in the United States. Posters and buttons help voters know and understand for whom and for what they are voting. Old posters and buttons from presidential campaigns are often valued and considered collectible by people. Cornell University Libraries house the Susan H. Douglas Collection of Political Americana in their Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. The collection consists of approximately 5,500 pieces of political memorabilia dating from 1789 to 1960 in the following categories: ballots, bric-a-brac (larger, three-dimensional objects), broadsides (small posters), buttons, cartoons, maps and charts, pamphlets, parade items, posters, prints, ribbons, sheet music, songbooks, textiles, trinkets, and wearing apparel. All were used for presidential elections, and the artifacts reflect the culture and people of the time.

Resources

Campaign Politics: What's Fair? What's Foul? by Kathiann Kawalski
Contemporary analysis of the political scene in the United States. For middle-school students. Includes media roles in campaigns as well as election reform movements.

Class Election for the Black Lagoon by Mike Thayer
Young students will be able to clearly tell the "right and wrongs" of school campaigning. A humorous look at school elections.

Class President by Johanna Hurwitz
Hurwitz explores school elections involving children in the upper elementary grades.

So You Want to Be President? by Weston Woods
Another humorous look at presidents. Filled with anecdotes and trivia illustrating the variety of men who have held this office. For age 8 and older.

Vocabulary List

Use this list to explore new vocabulary, create idea webs, or brainstorm related subjects.

Ballot
Button
Campaign
Candidate
Cast
Election
Electoral
Emphasis
Govern
Government
Leader
Media
Memorabilia
Office
Pattern
Political

Politics
Poster
Process
Proportion
Promise
Reform
Run
Scale
Slogan
Symbols
Unity
Vote

Theodore Roosevelt
Campaign Poster
1904
Artist unknown
Colored print reproduction
18" x 24"
Pennsylvania
Collection of
Jim Matthews.
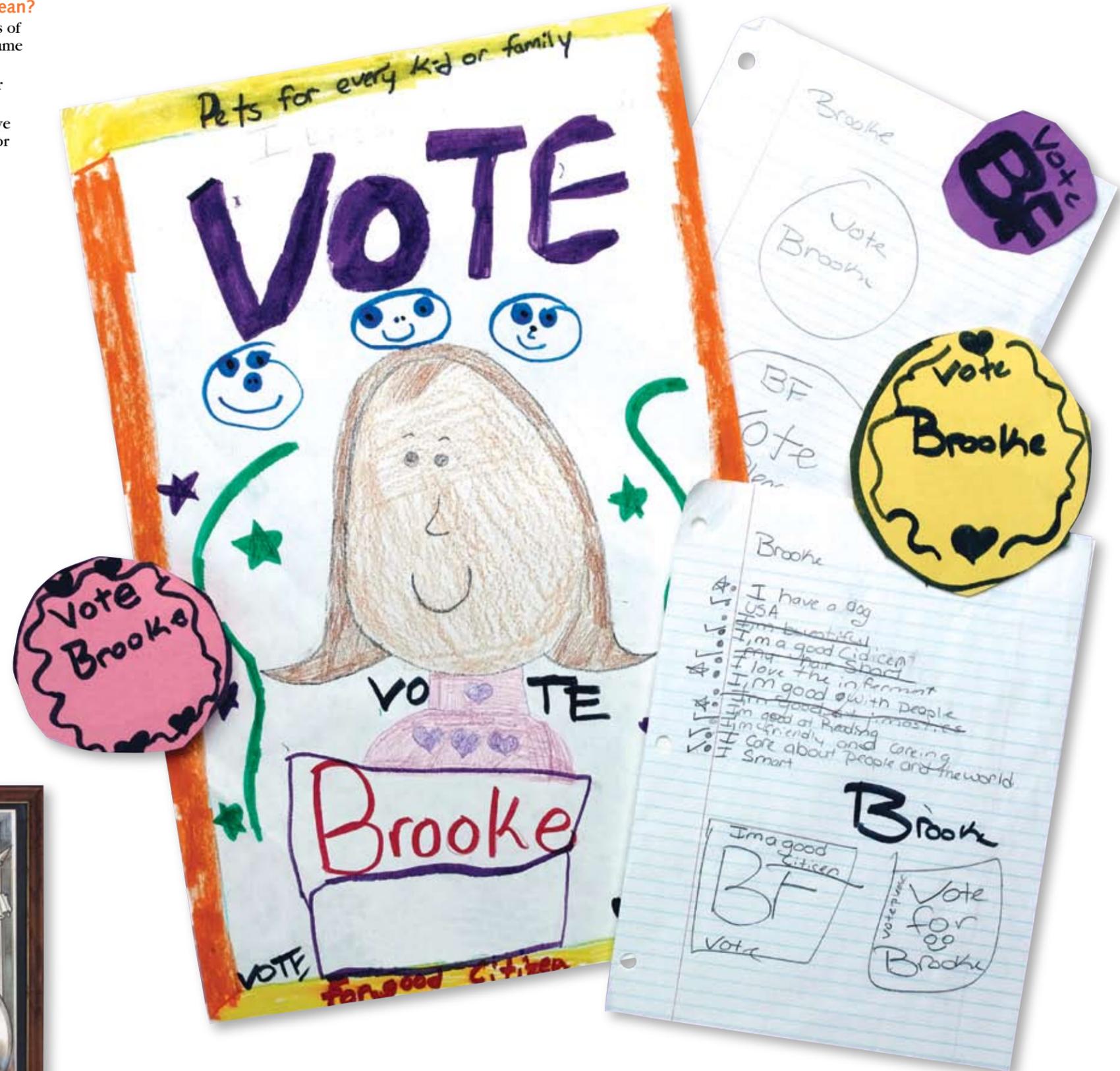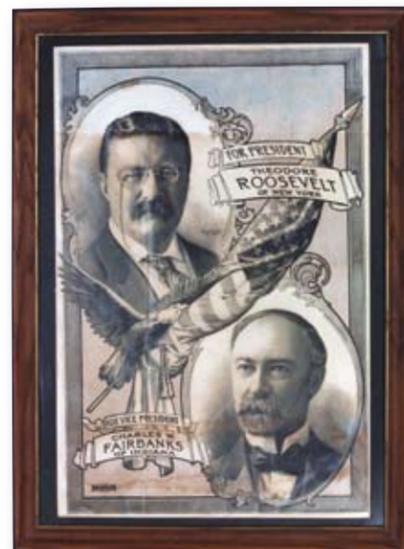
Artwork by students from Little River Elementary School, Durham, North Carolina.
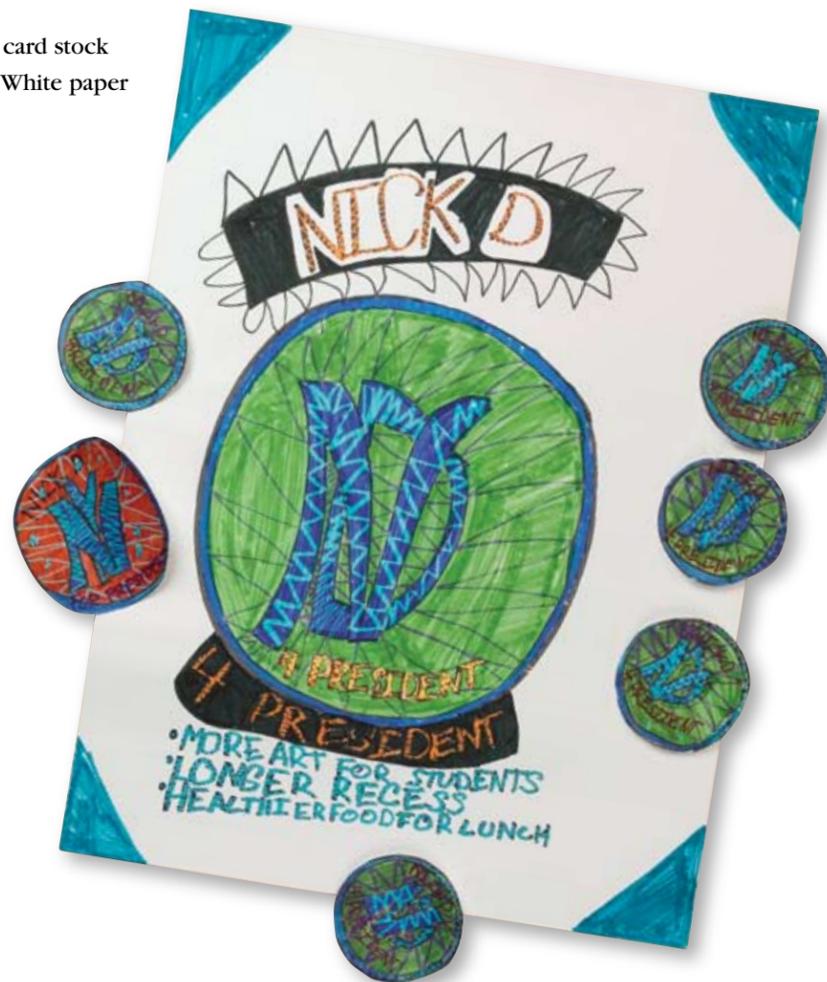Teachers: Barbi Bailey-Smith; Billie Capps

	K-2	3-4	5-6
Suggested Preparation and Discussion	Find out what children know about voting and the electoral process. Focus on local issues and candidates. Who has gone along with someone when they voted? Discuss how someone becomes elected to an office—how votes are cast and counted plus who gets to vote. Talk about how candidates campaign to convince voters that they are the most-qualified person for the position and that the issues they support deserve attention.	Follow the election process during a campaign season. How do candidates call attention to their qualifications? Their issues? How does the campaign change as the election draws near? Discuss Thomas Jefferson's belief that people in the United States should campaign for the "Office of Citizen" to support the government and the common good. Everyone is responsible for respecting diversity, volunteering, joining community organizations, voting, and serving on juries.	

Display political photographs, posters, pamphlets, buttons, and other campaign materials collected from local, state, and national campaigns. How do these artifacts catch attention and help people make personal voting decisions? Discuss the importance of color, catchy slogans, and other visual effects in helping to capture votes.

Ask a candidate for office—from student council to school boards or other offices—to speak with the group about the importance of public service. How does it enrich the life of the candidate? Of the constituents?

Students list the qualities that they will bring to an elected office (K-2), the merits of their position on an issue (3-4), or the reasons why it is so important to vote (5-6).

Crayola® Supplies	• Colored Pencils • Glue Sticks • Markers • Scissors

Other Materials	• Masking tape • Poster board, oak tag, or card stock • Recycled file folders • White paper

Artwork by students from St. Theresa School, Hellertown, Pennsylvania.

	K-2	3-4	5-6
Process: Session 1 20-30 min.	**Create a poster** **1.** Consider ways to portray the points to be made in a visual way. Sketch poster ideas—words and symbols. Remember a poster has center, top, bottom, and border areas to visually energize. Consider emphasis, balance, and proportion in the design. **2.** Scale up the drawing on larger, sturdier paper. Draw attention to the poster and create unity by filling shapes and spaces with colors or patterns.		
Process: Session 2 20-30 min.	**Design a campaign button** **3.** Choose the slogan and/or logo to include on the button. **4.** Cut circles from recycled file folders. Design buttons on the circles or glue colorful paper to them first. Air-dry the glue. **5.** Emphasize the slogan with dark lines or other effects. Fill the button with color for added punch. **6.** Attach buttons on clothing with masking tape loops. **7.** Display posters and buttons before a relevant election.		
Assessment	• Conduct a classroom election. Measure the effectiveness of campaign materials by asking students to cast ballots based on visual appeal. • Ask students to reflect on this lesson and write a DREAM statement to summarize the most important things they learned.		
Extensions	Visit a local government building. Tour voter registration areas. See voting machines and learn how they operate. Regularly vote on choices within the classroom such as which games to play at recess, how to thank a volunteer, or which book or poem to read aloud. Computer-assisted drawing programs may be helpful for some children who have small-motor challenges.	Suggest that children work in small groups to brainstorm slogans, convincing get-out-the-vote strategies, and logo ideas. Discuss: Is it always the best person for the office who wins the election? How can a country ensure that elections are fair? Learn more about election reform efforts. Enjoy the movie "Napoleon Dynamite." Follow Pedro's infamous campaign for school president with its cultural errors and funny upsets. Write skits with similar incidents. Gifted students could develop campaign materials to advocate for an issue such as care for the environment, year-round schools, or health care. Collect position statements from various candidates. Hold a mock debate with different students taking the roles of the candidates.	

Richard Nixon Campaign Buttons
1974
Artist unknown
Tin and paint
1" diameter
Pennsylvania
Collection of Ann Lesher.