

Albuquerque Model City Council Curriculum

Model City Council: Lesson 8

Lesson Topics: Campaigns in Albuquerque; In-Class Campaigns, Candidate Speeches; and Mock Election

Aim: To give students background on campaigns and elections in Albuquerque; to give students an opportunity to reflect on campaigns; to give students practice in public speaking and evaluating a candidate; to elect a “city councilor” for the mock council hearing.

Skills to be Addressed:

- Reflection on contemporary campaigns after participating in a mock campaign
- Public speaking
- Short essay writing

Objectives:

- Students will
- Learn about Albuquerque elections.
 - Create and present materials to the class.
 - Deliver and/or listen to campaign speeches.
 - Participate in a mock election.
 - Write essays that reflect on contemporary campaigns and elections.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B
Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6
Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3
Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Timeframe: One 60-minute period.

Materials:

- Martin Luther King's “I Have a Dream” speech

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- Computers with access to the Internet
- Posterboard, markers, and other art materials

NOTE: If you want your class to participate in a mock council, you could:

- arrange a mock council with another class in your school.
- arrange a mock council with a class in another school. You could use the [Model City Council Facebook page](#) to find a class that is interested.
- arrange a more formal mock council at the city's Council Chambers (arrange through the [City Council office](#)), the school district's board meeting room or some other special venue. Classes have used the Council Chambers in the past. The University of New Mexico also has facilities that would lend verisimilitude to the proceedings.

Procedure:

I. Developing campaigns

- Divide students into groups of four. Once in their groups, students should be asked to assign one person to be a *researcher*, one person to be a *speechwriter*, one person to be a *campaign manager*, and one person to be the *candidate*. If there are more than four students in a group, more than one student can hold any position except candidate.

Those playing the role of councilors should know they will have to prepare for and take on extra responsibilities at the Mock Council.

The group's job is to serve as the campaign team for a mock election for the City Council seat from your district. It must be clear the candidate(s) who wins this in-class election will represent the class as the councilor at the Mock City Council hearing.

Each campaign team's goal, then, is simple: to get its candidate elected. To do so, the campaign team will have to write a speech that the candidate will deliver to "residents" of the council district, i.e., the class.

The researcher's role is to find statistical information on the election district.

The campaign manager's job is to think strategically about the makeup of the district, the concerns of district residents, and what the candidate should stand for. The campaign manager will use information taken from the researcher's findings to develop the focus and content of the mock election speech and of the campaign. The campaign manager is also responsible for overseeing the creation of a campaign poster. The poster should, using a slogan and graphics, reinforce the campaign message.

The speechwriter takes this information and creates a persuasive, polished speech. The "Giving a Speech" handout will give him some structure and guidance about the speech.

The candidate's job is to rehearse and perfect the speech so that he or she may present it smoothly to the class the next day. He can collaborate with the others to create a campaign he's comfortable with. He could also practice giving a speech using Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech."

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Campaign groups can also create brief campaign commercials advertising their candidate. No negative campaigning is allowed. In other words, they can promote their candidate, but they cannot disparage another candidate.

Ask groups if they would like you to provide the posters and markers and other materials for their campaigns or if they would like to provide it themselves. Chances are, they will take the materials from you. You can point out that you are providing **public financing for their campaigns**, an option that candidates for public office in Albuquerque also have.

Albuquerque's Public Financing System

Candidates running for city councilor or mayor can choose to receive **public financing** to run a campaign. A candidate qualifies for public campaign funds if he agrees to limit his spending to a certain amount and if he gathers a certain number of \$5 contributions from registered voters. Voters overwhelmingly chose to enact the public finance system in 2005. It was called the Open and Ethical Elections Program.

Why would giving a candidate public money to run a campaign help create open and ethical campaigns? What are the advantages to voters to have publicly financed campaigns? What are the disadvantages?

Some advantages:

- Public financing allows anyone to run for office, not just those with money, as long as they prove they have support in the community (the \$5 contributions prove support).*
- Candidates can spend their time talking to voters rather than raising money.*
- Public financing means candidates will not receive money from private or business interests that might want something in exchange after a candidate is elected.*

Some disadvantages:

- The money comes from taxpayers.*
- A publicly financed campaign might have a hard time competing against a candidate who uses private money and outspends him*

Can the city (or state or U.S. government) limit the amount of money a candidate can spend? *No. The U.S. Supreme Court says limiting campaign spending limits free speech.*

Can the city (or the state or the U.S. government) limit how much money a person can contribute to a candidate? *No. The U.S. Supreme Court says limiting campaign contributions is limiting free speech.*

Public financing, because it's a *voluntary* system, is constitutional, according to the U.S. Supreme Court.

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II. Presenting Campaigns and Speeches

- Groups present their campaign to the class.
- Candidates give their speeches to the class.
- Students can take notes, perhaps to justify, in a paragraph, their vote. Which issues were most important? Did the speeches make a difference? Would negative campaigning have influenced their vote?

III. Voting

- Vote. It may be easier to have prepared ballots ready.
- If no candidate receives more than 40 percent of the vote, you can hold a run-off between the top two. See the note above about run-offs.

After a council representative has been elected, he or she chooses two to four council staff persons who will help him prepare for the Mock Council.

City Elections

The City Charter is the governing document of the City of Albuquerque just as the Constitution is to the federal government. The Charter says a candidate who wants to run for the City Council must file a petition with the signatures of 2 percent of registered voters in the district he wishes to represent.

Both the in-class mock election and a city election are non-partisan. Candidates for city office do not run explicitly as Republicans or Democrats.

If no candidate gets 50 percent of the vote in the regular election, the top two candidates compete in a **runoff** the following month.

IV. Quick Write

- Ask students to write a paragraph or more about the election they just participated in and any impressions, reflections and opinions they have about modern campaigns based on their own experiences.

Optional Homework

- Research public financing of campaigns in Albuquerque. (One helpful document: <http://research.policyarchive.org/96100.pdf>)
- Learn about runoff elections and how they can change the outcome of an election.

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- Prepare to present Participatory Budgeting Project Proposals at the next class.