

Week #1: Let's Get This Party Started!

This week the fun really begins! As our students take their first steps toward defining themselves as candidates, we'll need to be very positive and supportive of their ideas. Guide them toward understanding the process rather than focusing on specifics they're coming up with. I guarantee that by the time they're 35 and ready to be President, they will not still think that donuts are an important political issue.

Read-Along Teach-Along Sheet: Political Parties

It's very hard to define the different political parties in a succinct way that's both accurate and easily digestible by children. You may want to polish this section to suit your own tastes. My intention is to stay very positive about every candidate, every party. There are intelligent, honest, moral people in all parties. This is not a time for us to communicate our own possibly strong political opinions in a negative way, because we don't want the children to be negative with each other when they're campaigning. So, as hard as it may be for you to say nice things about a party to which you do not belong, suck it up!

Thinking Activity: Defining Your Issues and Priorities

A lot of the work we do during this class will involve introspection and self-analysis. We as teachers have to work with whatever comes out. If my student wants to start a bike-riding party, I'm going to have to use that to teach the ideas I want to teach him. This can become an interesting exercise, maybe the first time some of the younger kids have really asked themselves who they are and what they believe. We are not looking for "liberty" and "democracy" among their core values. We may be looking for freedom, but it may come out in the context of freedom to stay out after dark.

Creating a Political Party

Some questions to work through on page 1, and a kind of charter document to fill out on page 2.

Group Activity

This game will work best with more than one child, but can be done with one. Introduces the concept of facts vs. opinions, and gives the kids an active, non-verbal way to take a stand on issues.

Read-Along Teach-Along: Political Parties

The Republican Party was founded in **1854** and is often called the “Grand Old Party” or the **GOP**. The first Republican president was **Abraham Lincoln**. Republicans believe in limiting **government** to give people more **freedom**. They believe that people should **help other people** when they need help, rather than relying on the **government** to do it. The Republicans’ mascot is an **elephant**, and the color associated with Republicans is **red**.

The Democratic Party is the **oldest** political party in the United States. It was founded by **Thomas Jefferson**. Democrats believe that the government should **help poor people** and **fix injustice**, even if it means **raising taxes**. They believe in making sure workers have **fair conditions**, and making businesses **protect the environment**. The Democrat’s mascot is a **donkey**, and the color associated with Democrats is **blue**.

The Libertarian Party wants the government to be very **limited**, so that we have as much **freedom** as possible. The symbol of this party is **Lady Liberty**, and their color is **yellow**.

The Constitution Party wants the government to stick very closely to the ideas laid out in our **founding documents**: the Declaration of **Independence**, the **Constitution of the United States**, and the Bill of **Rights**. Their colors are **red, white, and blue**, and their symbol is an **American Bald Eagle**.

The Green Party believes in protecting the **environment**, being **peaceful**, and letting everyone **participate**. Their color is **green** and their symbol is a **plant**.

Challenge Questions:

1. Look up the web sites of all of these political parties.
2. Why do you think it’s called a party? What is the root in the word “party”?
3. Which party has the best name?
4. Why do you think it’s important for a party to have a color?
5. What is the worst possible name you can think of for a political party?

Thinking Activity: Defining Your Issues and Priorities

This week, you are going to start your own political party! You can make a party that promotes the ideas you believe in, and works to do the things you want done. Here are some questions to help you think about the ideas that your political party will embrace.

1. What are your three favorite things to do?

2. What is more important, to be free or to be safe?

3. What should there be more of in this world?

4. What would you get rid of that happens in the world right now?

5. What causes you to get into arguments with people?

6. What do you think is the best thing anyone ever did?

7. What is the worst thing that anyone could do?

8. If you had to spend all day doing one thing, what would it be?

9. If you could build a building, what would happen inside?

10. Pretend you could hang a sign over your life. What would it say?

Inventing a Political Party: Page 1

NAME:

What words are these parties' names based on?

Republican Party: _____

Democratic Party: _____

Libertarian Party: _____

Write down three words that mean something wonderful to you:

Can you create a party name out of each of these words by adding the suffix -ian or -ic? What about other suffixes?

MASCOT:

Name the animal that comes to mind when you think of each quality, and the quality that comes to mind when you think of each animal:

Smart: _____

Pig: _____

Strong: _____

Werewolf: _____

Happy: _____

Dog: _____

Loving: _____

Monkey: _____

Dignified: _____

Buffalo: _____

Funny: _____

Hawk: _____

Name the worst animals you can think of to be mascots for a political party:

COLOR:

Name the color that comes to mind when you think of each quality, and the quality that comes to mind when you think of each color.

Brave: _____

Grey: _____

Truthful: _____

Purple: _____

Caring: _____

Gold: _____

Hopeful: _____

Orange: _____

Inventing a Political Party: Page 2

It's time to reveal your brand new political party. Introduce it to the world!

NAME:

CORE PRINCIPLES:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

COLOR:

MASCOT:



Challenge Questions:

1. Why did you choose your name?
2. Why did you choose your color?
3. Why did you choose your mascot?
4. Look up a political party's charter online and read the preamble.
5. Do we need so many political parties? Do we need more?

Group Activity: Agree or Disagree?

After defining “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree” and “strongly disagree,” the leader reads out different statements of opinion and the students react appropriately as defined in the rules for each round. Once you get the idea here, you can substitute your own statements of opinion.

ROUND ONE:

Students who strongly agree reach up high.
Students who agree, touch their shoulders.
Students who disagree touch their waists.
Students who strongly disagree touch their toes.

ROUND TWO:

Students who strongly agree hop up and down.
Students who agree march in place.
Students who disagree sit down.
Students who strongly disagree lie down on the floor.

ROUND THREE:

Students with different opinions run to different spots in the room, defined by the leader. You could write the words on paper and tape them up to remind the kids where to go.

Add more rounds!

Example statements of opinion for you to use:

1. Milk is better than juice.
2. Children should be allowed to cross the street without their parents.
3. Computers are better than televisions.
4. Girls rule!
5. Boys rule!
6. Playing at the playground is better than reading a book.
7. Non-fiction is more interesting than fiction.
8. Caves are fun to explore.
9. Recycling is important.
10. Bedtime should be at 11 pm.
11. Children should be allowed to vote.
12. Cars are better than bicycles.

You get the idea — have fun!