

September 5, 2012, 4:06 pm [4 Comments](#)

Great Free Web Sites for Teaching Election 2012

By [MICHAEL GONCHAR](#)



Pen Pal News gives students from different parts of the country a chance to be election pen pals.

If you're like us, you see the election everywhere on the Web. But finding useful Web sites for *teaching* the election? That's a different story.

Below, we've gathered a list of what we think are the best election-related Web sites for teachers we've seen, and organized them by category.

And if you haven't looked already, visit our own [Election 2012 resource page](#). There you'll find links to lesson plans (including our [special curriculum unit](#)), student crosswords, a special Election 2012 [student contest](#), and links to a huge variety of Times articles, Opinion pieces and multimedia.

Great Free Web Sites for Teaching Election 2012

1. Election Pen Pals: At [PenPal News Red Blue](#) you can sign up your classroom to be pen pals with students from a different geographic region in the U.S. Over a six week period, your class will learn about five important election issues that they can write about during their pen-pal partnership.

2. Political Matchmaking: Sometimes the incessant mudslinging and obsessive poll watching hide the fact that the election should really be about the issues that affect our lives and the world we live in. [iSideWith.com](#) lets students take a short quiz to find out which candidate is their best match based on their own political opinions.

USA Today's [Candidate Match Game II](#) lets students answer questions and watch as the face of President Obama or Mitt Romney shift across the screen depending on the answers they choose.

Or, students can take this [Political Party Quiz](#) to be part of a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. [ElectNext](#) is another matchmaking tool, though it requires participants to sign in with an e-mail address or social media connection.

3. Election Lessons: We've created our own flexible, four-part [Election Unit](#) that includes lesson ideas and projects and culminates in a mock election.

The Choices Program provides a nice companion: a free "[Following the U.S. Presidential Election](#)" lesson that builds students' media literacy skills by having them compare sources as they analyze the news. The [Youth Leadership Initiative](#) also provides general election lesson plans and runs its own mock election (see below) and e-Congress.

Edutopia has additional ideas and resources for how to use [project-based learning to engage students in the election](#).

4. Issue Research: The most comprehensive tool for researching the candidate's stance on issues is the nonpartisan nonprofit [ProCon.org](#). The site provides quotations from Mr. Obama, Mr. Romney and the major third party candidates on more than 60 issues.

5. Mock Election: Our own [Election Unit](#) provides a curriculum road map for how to organize a mock election in your classroom or school.

National mock elections are also taking place this year online, and you can sign your students up to participate in [The My Voice National Student Mock Election](#) or the [Youth Leadership Initiative](#) mock election. In addition, we like the detailed [mock election curriculum guide](#) (PDF) produced by Michigan Government Television.

6. Election Game: We've seen plenty of buzz about MTV's [Fantasy Election](#), an online game styled after the ultra-popular fantasy football leagues. Participants draft a team of presidential and Congressional candidates and rack up points based on how well the candidates perform in various categories such as transparency and honesty. We signed up ourselves, but it's still too early to tell if the game will appeal to students the same way fantasy sports teams do.

7. Youth Reporting: Are you looking for a way to give your students a voice in this election (besides, of course, through [our contest](#))?

You can get inspired to have your students create their own election videos by watching Youth Communication's [Teen Guide to the 2012 Election](#) or New Tech Network's [#Myparty12](#), where students create a party platform and a thirty-second video commercial.

Students are also reporting on the election at [What Kids Can Do and Y-Press](#), [Youth Radio](#) and [Scholastic](#).

8. Candidate Commercials: Having students analyze television commercials can help

hone their media literacy skills. Watch the candidates' commercials on their respective YouTube channels, or watch historic commercials from past presidential elections on [The Living Room Candidate](#). You can use our [Television Commercial Analysis Chart](#) to help guide student analysis.

Students will love FlackCheck.org's exploration of the power of negative advertising through its creative "[Could Lincoln Be Elected Today?](#)" series. It also challenges the most egregious inaccuracies in current campaign commercials on its "[Taking Down the Worst](#)" page.

9. Debate Watch: NBC Learn, in collaboration with Lynn University, provides a series of [K-12 activities](#) to help students prepare for and analyze the presidential debates. The activities use video clips from past debates, news reports and commercials.

10. Candidate Web Sites: The official Web sites for the presidential candidates – [Barack Obama](#), [Mitt Romney](#) (and third party candidates like [Gary Johnson](#) and [Jill Stein](#)) – are worthwhile places to see how the candidates present themselves and their positions on the important issues in this election.

11. Tracking the Election: You can turn your class into election fanatics and have them keep score on how the candidates are doing, in the same way they might pore over sports team stats or Billboard rankings.

The New York Times [Electoral Map](#) or Huffington Post [Election Dashboard](#) provide colorful visuals for students to follow the electoral scoreboard as we head toward Election Day.

For poll watching, [The Times](#) and [Politico](#) both offer clear up-to-date swing state results. Or, track a different kind of index with your students, the "Twindex" – a tracking tool that [compares Twitter posts](#) about the presidential candidates.

12. Election Math: Carnegie Learning has partnered with NBC Learn to create [math problems](#) tied to voter statistics, campaign polling and other election-related topics. For ten more ideas on how to explore mathematics using the election, read our lesson plan "[The United States of Numeracy: The Math of a Presidential Campaign.](#)"

13. Election Opinion Questions: Every day during the school year we post a [new student opinion question](#), and some of our questions this fall will be election-related, such as our current contest question: "[How Would the Presidential Campaigns Change if the Voting Age Were 13?](#)" During this election season NBC Learn will also offer "[Weekly Thought Starters](#)".

What free election Web sites will you be using in the classroom this fall? How will you be using them? Let us know in your comments below, and we might add some of your suggestions when we update this post.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+
- E-mail

- Share
- [Print](#)

[Lesson Plans](#), [Election 2012](#), [Web recommendations](#)

Related Posts

From The Learning Network

- [Secretly-Recorded Video Stirs Political Debate](#)
- [Obama Makes His Case](#)
- [‘The Words They Used’ at the Democratic and Republican Conventions](#)
- [Election Unit, Part 4: What Do You Think?](#)
- [Romney’s Speech Caps Republican Convention](#)

-
- Previous Post [How Competitive Are You?](#)
 - Next Post [Word of the Day | nettle](#)

4 Comments

1. September 6, 2012 9:43 am [Link](#)

Deconstructing Campaign Commercials: A Media Literacy Lesson All Students Need

http://www.frankwbaker.com/media_politics

— *Frank W Baker*

2. September 7, 2012 4:59 pm [Link](#)

Mimio’s “Get Out the Vote” lesson series – gives ideas for using interactive whiteboards and/or student response systems to provide a “hands-on” understanding of voting and elections.

<http://tinyurl.com/95sb3o9>

— *Kelle*

3. September 10, 2012 4:42 pm [Link](#)

In your mock election category, please include Kids Voting USA

<http://www.kidsvotingusa.org> which offers outstanding nonpartisan curriculum and authentic voting experiences for grades K-12. Unlike some of the other mock votes, through Kids Voting, students vote on the same candidates and issues as adults do, and the election mirrors the official voting process.

— *Sarah*

4. 4. September 13, 2012 1:07 pm [Link](#)

How do I find the article about Steve Jobs and his experience with fa=ilure?

— *andrea emerson*

Add your comments...

Your Name Required

Your E-mail Required, will not be published

Your Comment

Comments are moderated and generally will be posted if they are on-topic and not abusive. For more information, please see our [Comments FAQ](#).

Submit

Search This Blog

- Previous Post [How Competitive Are You?](#)
- Next Post [Word of the Day | nettle](#)

• **Follow This Blog**

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [RSS](#)

Lesson Plan Categories

- [American History »](#)
- [Civics »](#)
- [Current Events »](#)
- [Economics »](#)
- [Fine Arts »](#)
- [Geography »](#)

- [Global History »](#)
- [Health »](#)

- [Journalism »](#)
- [Language Arts »](#)
- [Mathematics »](#)
- [Media Studies »](#)
- [Science »](#)
- [Social Studies »](#)
- [Technology »](#)
- [Academic Skills »](#)

This Week

Writing Rules!



- [Writing advice from The Times »](#)

Academic Integrity



- [Resources »](#)

[Banned Books Week](#)



- [Ways to Celebrate »](#)

[All Election Resources](#)



- [Special four-part teaching unit »](#)



[Lesson Plan](#)

Lesson plans across the curriculum based on Times content.

- [See all Lesson Plans »](#)

[Student Opinion](#)



We invite students 13 and older to comment on issues in the news.

- [See all Student Opinions »](#)
- [How To Use This Blog »](#)
- [Daily News Quiz »](#)
- [Word of the Day »](#)
- [Student Crossword »](#)
- [Times Fill-In »](#)
- [Ideas From Our Readers »](#)
- [Teaching Topics Index »](#)
- [Guest Posts »](#)

- [6 Q's About the News »](#)
- [On This Day in History »](#)
- [Teenagers in The Times »](#)
- [Ideas for Any Day's Times »](#)
- [Poetry Pairings »](#)
- [Test Yourself Questions »](#)
- [Student Contests »](#)
- [Reading Club »](#)

About The Learning Network

The Learning Network provides teaching and learning materials and ideas based on [New York Times](#) content.

Teachers can use or adapt our [lessons](#) across subject areas and levels. Students can respond to our [Opinion questions](#), take our [News Quizzes](#), learn the [Word of the Day](#), try our [Test Yourself questions](#), complete a [Fill-In](#) or read our [Poetry Pairings](#).

Join the conversation by commenting on any post. We'd love to hear what you think!

- [About The Learning Network »](#)
- [Get lesson plans by e-mail »](#)
- [Follow us on Twitter »](#)
- [Like us on Facebook »](#)

- [FAQ »](#)
- [Commenting FAQ »](#)
- [NYT Privacy Policies »](#)
- [E-mail us »](#)

Comments of the Moment

[" My ultimate goal isn't my own happiness, but it's making everyone around me happy. When everyone around me is happy and in a good mood, it definitely makes me feel better."](#)

— [MacKenzie C](#)

[Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?](#)

[" Happiness to me is what my life revolves around. I want to be happy in life, but I don't make it a big deal. I keep my thoughts most of the time to myself and sometimes there are things that I needs to do that make me unhappy, but if that means that I will end up being successful, then it is worth it."](#)

— [Adam S.](#)

[Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?](#)

" Happiness is certainly important to me, however I find my happiness after completing school work."

— Kyle H

Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?

" Happiness is very important for me. I used to compete with my friends and family to be the happiest, however, I soon found out that doing so just made me miserable. "

— Megan K.

Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?

" Happiness is something that I both excel at fail rather poorly at. I find things that make me happy in life are hard to come by, I just can't make myself happy. Some days I will be entirely out of it and feel horrible about myself and about life. Thinking about trying to be happy and what being happy really is a thought that bothers me greatly. It's difficult trying to be happy when everyone else I know is just happy all the time. I can feign it for my friends but sometimes it just too much."

— Lily English 2

Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?

" I don't really try that hard to be happy because truthfully I already am happy. I am in a great school, have a family that supports me, and I have amazing friends that care about me."

— Julianna, English 1, Period 1

Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?

" I do not find myself in a happiness rat race, i rather think of it as a cross country journey, it will take awhile to get to my destination but until i do get there im going to have a great trip with good, bad and all other memories. I'm a laid back guy, I live and let live and this article does not relate to me but it might relate to my father, he tries so hard and when he gets one step closer he is pushed back two steps because of himself"

— Ethan, English 1

Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?

Follow The New York Times »

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [RSS](#)

Archive

Select Month

TicketWatch: Theater Offers by E-Mail



Recent Posts

September 25

[Is Trying Too Hard to Be Happy Making You Sad?](#)

How important is happiness to you? Do you sometimes try so hard to be happy, or show friends that you're happy, that it makes you anxious or unhappy?

September 25

[Test Yourself | English, Sept. 25, 2012](#)

Can you choose the best synonym for "inexorable," as it is used in the article?

September 25

[Bat Cave to the Rescue?](#)

What is white nose syndrome?

September 25

[News Quiz | September 25, 2012](#)

See what you know about the news of the day.

September 25

[Word of the Day | translucent](#)

This word has appeared in 200 New York Times articles in the past year.

Other Education Resources at The Times

- [Education Life](#)
- [Make an Education Donation](#)
- [The Choice Blog](#)
- [The New York Times College Scholarship Program](#)

- [The New York Times in Education \(NIE\)](#)
- [The New York Times Upfront](#)
- [Times Education section](#)
- [Today's Front Page](#)

- [Home](#)
- [World](#)
- [U.S.](#)
- [N.Y. / Region](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Arts](#)
- [Style](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Site Map](#)

- [© 2012 The New York Times Company](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Your Ad Choices](#)
- [Terms of Service](#)
- [Terms of Sale](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Advertise](#)