

Teaching Election 2024 Doesn't Have to be Controversial

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by Frank W Baker, media literacy ed consultant

A recent Education Week headline read: "Educators Reluctant to Teach Election 2024." Are you one of those?

I have some ideas for you to consider if you plan to teach about the upcoming election.

First, I recently posted on my media literacy website: "How To Watch A Presidential Debate". On that page, you can download "Political Ad Analysis Worksheet" and a "Debate Watchers Worksheet." You can find it all at:

<https://www.frankwbaker.com/mlc/how-to-watch-a-presidential-debate-an-updated-media-literacy-guide-for-teachers-and-students-may-2024/>

Next, several years ago I was asked to provide Horry County (SC) social studies educators with some training during that week before school starts.

Since it was election season, I decided to share an activity related to candidate commercials, since the airwaves were full of those ads.

In one hat I had the names of candidates running for office. In another hat I had pieces of paper listing one of a number of relevant current issues. The assignment I gave these educators (working in groups) was to create a 30 second commercial (in writing) for their candidate and their chosen issue.

Teachers were given time to research the issues. For example,

I recommended they not only go to the candidates' websites, but also search the web for anytime a candidate referenced the issue.

How to write a 30 second commercial?

As part of this activity, I distributed a 8 X 11 script template with two columns: one labeled audio and the other labeled video. I also shared some examples of what a commercial on paper looks like.

After sufficient time, teachers (or students) working in groups share their commercial.

I asked a representative from each group to read their ad and using a stopwatch, I timed it to see it was actually 30 seconds. (that was the challenge).

If given more time, students could actually produce and create their commercial, using user-friendly editing tools available today.

For more information and resources, head over to my website "The Role of Media In Politics"

<https://www.frankwbaker.com/mlc/media-politics/>