

Evaluating Political Candidates

Benchmark: SS.7.C.2.9 Evaluate political candidates for political office by analyzing their qualifications, experience, issue-based platforms, debates, and political ads.

Also assesses: SS.7.C.2.7 Conduct a mock election to demonstrate the voting process and its impact on a school, community, or local level.

Clarifications/Objectives:

- Students will identify the constitutional requirements to run for federal political office.
- Students will recognize the requirements to run for state and local political offices.
- Students will be able to analyze and/or evaluate the qualifications of candidates for public office based on their experience, platforms, debates, and political advertisements.

Time: One to two class periods

Materials:

- PowerPoint
- Handouts A – C, plus Constitution excerpts
- Computer
- Projector
- Computer/tablet access for students

Lesson Preparation

- Review all handouts and PowerPoints
- Print and review the PowerPoint in “notes view”. The PowerPoint includes notes to guide the lesson.
- Make copies of handouts
- Cut the excerpts of the U.S. and Florida Constitutions for distribution (each excerpt is a half-sheet of paper)

Note: An extension for this lesson can be found in Benchmark 2.11: Communication Evaluation. Students will examine political communication in the form of political ads and assess them for bias, propaganda, and symbolism.

Lesson Overview

Warm Up - Distribute Handout A: What matters to you? Have students complete the handout as a bell ringer activity. Have students discuss their responses in a pair or small group. Ask students to name the top 5 characteristics they selected in a presidential candidate. Ask students for the least important characteristics in their opinion.

Continue with the PowerPoint and tell students there are certain requirements in place for those who want to run for political office on the federal, state, and local level. Ask students to guess what some of the requirements might be.

Divide the class into six groups. Provide each group with an excerpt of either the U.S. or Florida Constitution that contains the requirements to hold political office on the federal or state level. Each student will also need the Running for Political Office (**Handout B**) chart. Students will need to complete the handout in their group based on the excerpt of the Constitution they received. Once they are finished, jigsaw the students into new small groups so they can share their answers to the handout. Debrief as a class using the teacher handout.

Continue with the PowerPoint by discussing what individuals should look for in a political candidate. The presentation will provide questions for consideration about the experience, platform, debates, and political advertisements of a candidate. The presentation will also provide an example comparing two fictional political advertisements and have students analyze which candidate, based on the information provided, is the most qualified.

Distribute Handout C. Working individually, students will need to read through the biographies of the anonymous candidates. After evaluating the information provided, students should select the person they feel is the most qualified and the least qualified to serve as President of the United States. Students should highlight (underline or circle) the information they used to make their selections. *While the students are reading through the handout, create a chart with 10 columns labeled 1-10. After students make their selection, they should walk up front and place an M (most qualified) and L (least qualified) on the chart in the column for the appropriate candidate.* Debrief by discussing who the students have selected as the most qualified and the least qualified and revealing the identities of the candidates.

Check for Understanding The final slide will include a question from the End of Course Exam Item Specifications book. Have the students independently write down their answer and ask student to explain how they made their decision.

Extension: In order to reinforce the idea of evaluating candidates, have students consider the key issues during school, local, state, and federal elections. Have students participate in an election either at the school level or by participating in a Kids Voting initiative through a local organization.

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

Directions: Individually rank the characteristics below from most important (1) to least important (15) when considering a presidential candidate. Add any additional characteristics you would consider when voting for a presidential candidate in the blanks at the bottom of the handout.

Scale: 1 – Most Important to 16 – Least Important

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ Age | _____ Family History |
| _____ Religion | _____ Professionalism |
| _____ Gender | _____ Ethnic Background |
| _____ Educational Background | _____ Marital Status |
| _____ Character | _____ Physical Health |
| _____ Occupation | _____ Criminal History |
| _____ Prior Government Experience | _____ Military Service |
| _____ Personal Appearance | _____ Socio-Economic Status |

Other:

Running for Political Office

Political Office	Constitutional Requirements <i>Age? Citizenship? Residency? Other?</i>	Term length <i>How long can they serve?</i>
United States Senate		
United States House of Representatives		
President of the United States		
Florida Senate		
Florida House of Representatives		
Florida Governor		

Excerpt from the U.S. Constitution

Article I, Section 2: The United States House of Representatives

Section 2

The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

Excerpt from the U.S. Constitution

Article I, Section 3: The United States Senate

Section 3

The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second Year; and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.

No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

Excerpt from the U.S. Constitution

Article II, Section 1: President of the United States

Section 1

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected...

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

Excerpt from the Florida Constitution

Article III, Section 15: Florida Senators

Terms and qualifications of legislators.—

(a) SENATORS. Senators shall be elected for terms of four years, those from odd-numbered districts in the years the numbers of which are multiples of four and those from even-numbered districts in even-numbered years the numbers of which are not multiples of four; except, at the election next following a reapportionment, some senators shall be elected for terms of two years when necessary to maintain staggered terms.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS. Each legislator shall be at least twenty-one years of age, an elector and resident of the district from which elected and shall have resided in the state for a period of two years prior to election.

Article VI, Section 4: Disqualifications

No person may appear on the ballot for re-election to any of the following offices:

- (1) Florida representative,
- (2) Florida senator,
- (3) Florida Lieutenant governor,
- (4) any office of the Florida cabinet,
- (5) U.S. Representative from Florida, or
- (6) U.S. Senator from Florida

if, by the end of the current term of office, the person will have served (or, but for resignation, would have served) in that office for eight consecutive years.

Excerpt from the Florida Constitution

Article III, Section 15: Florida House of Representatives

Terms and qualifications of legislators.—

(b) REPRESENTATIVES. Members of the House of Representatives shall be elected for terms of two years in each even-numbered year.

(c) QUALIFICATIONS. Each legislator shall be at least twenty-one years of age, an elector and resident of the district from which elected and shall have resided in the state for a period of two years prior to election.

Article VI, Section 4: Disqualifications

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- (3) Florida Lieutenant governor,
- (4) any office of the Florida cabinet,
- (5) U.S. Representative from Florida, or
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if, by the end of the current term of office, the person will have served (or, but for resignation, would have served) in that office for eight consecutive years.

Excerpt from the Florida Constitution

Article IV, Section 5: Governor of Florida

Election of governor, lieutenant governor and cabinet members; qualifications; terms.—

(a) At a state-wide general election in each calendar year the number of which is even but not a multiple of four, the electors shall choose a governor and a lieutenant governor and members of the cabinet each for a term of four years beginning on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January of the succeeding year. In primary elections, candidates for the office of governor may choose to run without a lieutenant governor candidate. In the general election, all candidates for the offices of governor and lieutenant governor shall form joint candidacies in a manner prescribed by law so that each voter shall cast a single vote for a candidate for governor and a candidate for lieutenant governor running together.

(b) When elected, the governor, lieutenant governor and each cabinet member must be an elector not less than thirty years of age who has resided in the state for the preceding seven years. The attorney general must have been a member of the bar of Florida for the preceding five years. No person who has, or but for resignation would have, served as governor or acting governor for more than six years in two consecutive terms shall be elected governor for the succeeding term.

EVALUATING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Directions: Read each of the following biographies. Based on the information given, select the person you believe is the **most qualified** to serve as president and the person **least qualified** to serve as president. Highlight or circle the information in the biography of the most qualified and least qualified that led you to select them.

[Note: "Age as of this date" in the data refers to the point in each candidate's career at which he or she had accomplished all the activities listed in the data.]

Candidate 1

Colleges Attended: None (private secondary school in England)

Religion: Episcopal

Career (Major Occupations): Teacher, journalist, member of a labor union, delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Endorsed by a president for the Nobel Peace Prize, Noted public speaker

Married: 40 years **Children:** 6

Age as of this date: 65

Special Note: uncle served as President of the United States

Candidate 2

Colleges Attended: Morehouse College, B.A. Crozer Theological Seminary, B.D.; Boston University, Ph.D.

Religion: Protestant

Career (Major Occupations): Pastor, leader of a civil rights movement; President of a civil rights organization, Noted public speaker

Married: 15 years **Children:** 4

Age as of this date: 37

Special Note: 1 of 10 outstanding men of the year according to *Time* magazine; Nobel Prize winner; arrested on numerous occasions for political activism

Candidate 3

Colleges Attended: Wharton School of Finance, Fordham University, B.S.

Religion: Presbyterian

Career (Major Occupations): billionaire real estate developer, businessperson

Married: 3 times, 2 divorces **Children:** 5

Age as of this date: 69

Special Note: Attended New York Military Academy for high school

Candidate 4

Colleges Attended: University of Delaware, Syracuse University Law School J.D.

Religion: Roman Catholic

Career (Major Occupations): city council member, lawyer, United States Senator, served as a U.S. Vice President

Married: 37 years, second wife **Children:** 4

Age as of this date: 72

Special note: served 37 years in the United States Senate

Candidate 5

Colleges Attended: City College of New York, B.S., George Washington University, MBA

Religion: Episcopalian

Career (Major Occupations): decorated military officer, appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, served as U.S. Secretary of State

Married: 53 years

Children: 3

Age as of this date: 78

Special Note: unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate for the position of U.S. Secretary of State

Candidate 6

Colleges Attended: Princeton University, B.S., Harvard University Law School, J.D.

Religion: Protestant Christian

Career (Major Occupations): attorney, assistant to the mayor, Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development for the city, nonprofit executive director, Associate Dean of Student Services, Vice President for Community and External Affairs at a medical center

Married: 23 years

Children: 2

Age as of this date: 51

Special note: married to a former U.S. Senator

Candidate 7

Colleges Attended: Harvard University, A.B., Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Religion: Jewish

Career (Major Occupations): Actress; philanthropist; advocate

Married: 3 years

Children: 1

Age as of this date: 34

Special Note: Dual citizenship, United States and Israel; guest lecturer at Columbia University in terrorism and counterterrorism

Candidate 8

Colleges Attended: Tarkio College, University of Florida B.S., University of Miami, J.D.

Religion: Roman Catholic

Career (Major Occupations): city commissioner; state representative; state Speaker of the House; served in United States Senate

Married: 17 years

Children: 4

Age as of this date: 44

Special Note: first generation American

Candidate 9

Colleges Attended: University of Texas at Austin, B.A.

Religion: United Methodist

Career (Major Occupations): real estate developer; real estate broker; former Governor

Married: 41 years

Children: 3

Age as of this date: 62

Special Note: from a prominent political family, taught English as a second language in Mexico, studied Latin American affairs in college

Candidate 10

Colleges Attended: Wellesley College B.S., Yale University J.D.

Religion: United Methodist

Career (Major Occupations): Attorney; university professor; named one of the 100 most powerful lawyers in America by the *National Law Journal*; co-founded children's advocacy group, author; U.S. Senator; Secretary of State

Married: 40 years

Children: 1

Age as of this date: 67

Special Note: attempted to join the Marine Corps

Running for Political Office

Political Office	Constitutional Requirements <i>Age? Citizenship? Residency? Other?</i>	Term length <i>How long can they serve?</i>
United States Senate	At least 30 years old Citizen of the U.S. for at least 9 years Must reside in the state they wish to represent at the time of election	6 years No term limits
United States House of Representatives	At least 25 years old Citizen of the U.S. for at least 9 years Must reside in the state they wish to represent at the time of election	2 years No term limits
President of the United States	At least 35 years old Natural born citizen of the United States Must have been a resident of the U.S. for 14 years	Limited to 2 terms or a total of 10 years* *A 10 year term is possible if a person assumes the presidency with 2 years remaining in the Presidency, along with two full terms
Florida Senate	At least 21 years old Elector (voter) and resident of the district from which they are elected Resided in the state for a period of 2 years prior to election	4 year terms, up to 2 terms (8 years total) <i>Fl. Constitution: Article III, Section 13</i> <i>Article VI, Section 4</i>
Florida House of Representatives	At least 21 years old Elector (voter) and resident of the district from which they are elected Resided in the state for a period of 2 years prior to election	2 year terms, up to 4 terms (8 years total) <i>Fl. Constitution: Article III, Section 13</i> <i>Article VI, Section 4</i>
Florida Governor	At least 30 years old Must have resided in the state of Florida for at least the preceding seven years	No one who has served as governor for more than six years in two consecutive terms can be eligible for another term

EVALUATING PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Candidate's Biographical Data – Who's who?

Candidate 1 = Eleanor Roosevelt

Candidate 2 = Martin Luther King, Jr.

Candidate 3 = Donald Trump

Candidate 4 = Joe Biden

Candidate 5 = Colin Powell

Candidate 6 = Michelle Obama

Candidate 7 = Natalie Portman

Candidate 8 = Marco Rubio

Candidate 9 = Jeb Bush

Candidate 10= Hillary Clinton