

THE WHITE HOUSE PROJECT

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Table of Contents

Program Overview	2
Program Outline	4
Lesson Plans.....	5
Attachments	11

Program Overview:

The White House Project exposes children to different facts about an important building in the history of our nation, while providing information about the democratic process. The students do research using books and the Internet. The teacher locates relevant Web sites such as

www.EnchantedLearning.com/dictionary.html ,which explains how a United States president is elected. Another: www.whitehouse.gov/wh/kids/html is an early-childhood interactive site that takes the student on a tour of the White House.

The teacher began by reading *Woodrow, the White House Mouse* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes. Then the class holds a mock presidential election and has a discussion on how the president is elected. The class brainstorms ideas on democracy, and these ideas are put into a poem about democracy. The students then split up into groups. Each group researches a different room in the White House or a fact about the White House. They write up their facts and paste them into the windows of a cutout of the White House. The students also write letters to President George W. Bush.

The students:

The students were second graders. There are 25 students in the class. This project can be adapted for other grades.

The Staff:

Dyana O'Brien currently teaches second grade. Allison Demas assisted on the project.

What You Need:

Materials include a computer with Internet access and Student Writing Center software, chart paper, writing materials, the book *Woodrow, the White House Mouse*, and relevant periodicals.

Overall Value:

Through this program, the students are exposed to the history of the White House as a physical structure, not just a political symbol. They also become familiar with the rules of the U.S. presidential election. In addition, the students gain the abilities necessary to research a topic and sort information. They learn how to work cooperatively, with partners and in small groups.

Program Outline:

1. Identify parts of the White House using the book *Woodrow, the White House Mouse*.
2. Learn about the electoral process.
3. Introduction of Internet.
4. Hold a mock election.
5. Graph results of mock election.
6. Research facts on White House.
7. Create a poster of the White House displaying these facts.
8. Write a poem about democracy.
9. Write letters to the President of the United States.

Lesson Plans

Social Studies:

Identification of different parts of the White House

Objective: The students will learn about the various rooms of the White House.

Time: 1 class period

Materials: *Woodrow, the White House Mouse* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes, chart paper

Procedure: Read *Woodrow, the White House Mouse*.

Elicit from the students some of the different rooms featured in the book.

List these rooms on chart paper.

Social Studies/Math:

Hold a Mock Presidential Election

Objective: The students will learn about the election process by holding a mock election.

Time: 1 class period

Materials: pictures of the candidates, graph

Procedure: Set up a graph using pictures of George Bush and Al Gore. The students put a check in the column to cast their vote. Then glue American flags over each check.

Technology:

Research

Objective: The students will work cooperatively to find facts about the White House.

Time: 5 class periods

Materials : *Woodrow, the White House Mouse*, “Kid City Magazine (November 2000), pages printed from www.whitehouse.gov/wh/kids/html, chart paper

Procedure: The students break into small groups. Each group uses one of the resources to obtain information on specific topics:

- History of the building
- Children who lived in the White House
- White House pets
- A tour of the building and purposes of the rooms. The students

cooperatively present their information to the class. The teacher acts as recorder.

Art/Language Arts

White House Poster

Objective: The students combine their facts and artistic abilities to prepare a final presentation.

Time: 2 class periods

Procedure: Using an oak-tag poster of the White House, the students display their research. The windows on the White House poster open, and inside each window, the students place either an historical fact or a picture of a former resident or pet of the White House.

Language Arts/Social Studies:

Democracy

Objective: The students will use dictionaries to define the word “democracy”.

Time: 1 class period

Procedure: The students look up the definition of the word “democracy”.

They then brainstorm ideas on what democracy means to them.

(The complications that arose concerning the 2000 Presidential Election led to discussions about the benefits of democracy. The country did not have a victor in the election, there were disagreements regarding the equity of the voting process, and there were protests -- yet this was handled peacefully. There were no riots or shutdowns. Regardless of politics, daily life continued until a decision was ultimately made. This Language Arts lesson was an outgrowth of these discussions.)

Writing/Technology:

Letters to the President

Objective: The students will write letters to the president of the United States

Time: 2 -3 class periods

Procedure: Using Student Writing Center, the students write individual letters to the president, discussing their studies of the White House and asking questions about the presidency or the White House.

Web Sites:

www.EnchantedLeaming.com/dictionary.html

www.whitehouse.gov/wh/kids/html

www.stickerworld.org (KidCity website)

Dear President George Bush,

I am happy that you won the election. You have a very hard job now. I know that you will do a great job. How is your wife Laura Bush? She will be a good first lady. How are you feeling? Are you nervous about your new job? I voted for you in school. I wish I could come visit you at the White House.

From,

Vida Feng

Dear President Bush,

Congratulations Mr. President!!!!!! I am so happy that you are our new President. I am excited that you won. You are so lucky that you get to live in the White House. You should come and visit us at PS 314. We would all like to meet you. Good Luck President Bush.

From,

Amado James Lipana

Dear President Bush,

I am so happy that you finally won the election. It was such a long election. I knew that you would win. I hope you like your new home. Good Luck.

From,
Kenny Zeng