

## Activities Connected to Bluebonnet Voting

As you plan for your Bluebonnet Voting Day in January, consider incorporating some of the following activities. Most mirror part of the voting process in the larger society and each activity connects in some way to skills currently emphasized in the schools.

1. **Conduct Early Polling:** Have youngsters poll various constituencies about their voting preferences. See how the results change as the sample changes. What, for example, are the preferences of third graders compared to the choices of fifth graders? Does a sample composed entirely of girls make different choices than a sample composed entirely of boys? Have children report results in terms of percentages of those sampled.
2. **Report on Opinion Polls:** Have students check the strength of each book on the *Booktalk!* website). <http://www.mackinbooktalk.com>. Students can find ratings for each book (and can add their own) by first clicking on the book jacket of a particular book and then linking to “Reviews” on the tabs shown for that book. Have students graph the ratings with a line graph. Encourage them to plot new figures each week for a month. They may want to graph all twenty books (using a different color line each week) or simply keep track of the strength of a particular favorite.
3. **Voter Registration Drives:** Youngsters may want to encourage others who have not read five books to become eligible to vote. Have them create a rationale for encouraging voting by creating posters or public service announcements or editorials for a group newspaper.
4. **Register Potential Voters:** Issue Voter Registration Certificates for those children who have read (or heard read) five books. A sample template is located on the Bluebonnet voting page <http://www.txla.org/TBA-forms>. This Voter Registration Certificate is modeled after those issued to Texas voters. Ask children to bring the Voter Registration Certificate to their polling places. And, like voting in the larger society, librarians will have to have a list of “registered voters” to use for those who have forgotten their cards.
5. **Plan a Series of Debates:** Although you won’t need thirty pages of rules (such as those that governed the Presidential Debates), you can still establish a debating forum for children to plead for their favorite books, make cases for and against certain books, and practice their public speaking and organizational skills. Questions for debaters can come from other students, teachers, librarians, or parents.
6. **Campaign for Favorite Titles:** Have children construct campaign buttons or posters for their favorite titles. Snappy phrases that highlight their reasons for favoring a particular book reinforce main idea skills. They may also create

- advertisements or write editorials for a group newspaper for their favorite books, thereby practicing persuasion skills. Older students may create 60 second television advertisements. For a particularly telling exercise, have the students create an advertisement showing the reasons why they favor a particular book (positive advertising) and a 60 second advertisement showing the flaws in another book on the list (negative advertising). Discuss with the group the effectiveness of each.
7. **Decorate Doors:** Have classes (or small groups of children) select their favorite Bluebonnet books and decorate their classroom doors to advertise their favorites.
  8. **Create a Polling Place:** Keep a notebook of the names of those children eligible to vote. If you are in a school, consider arranging the voters first by precinct (a teacher's room or a particular grade level, for example), and then list each name in alphabetical order. Give the sheet two columns, one that shows the youngster's name and another that provides a place for him/her to sign when issued a ballot. Construct a spot for voting that ensures privacy and make available a ballot box for children to deposit their completed ballots. When children finish voting, give them an "I Voted Today!" sticker. The template for creating these voting stickers can be found at the Bluebonnet voting page <http://www.txla.org/TBA-forms>.
  9. **Reporting Election Results:** This announcement can be as elaborate as you are able to make it. Those children who have conducted early polling, or those who have campaigned, may want to have a time set aside to discuss the results and compare them to their early statistics.
  10. **Reporting Statewide Election Results:** Again, this announcement can be as elaborate as you are able to make it. We will provide the numbers of children who voted for each book as well as the numbers of children voting at each grade level. Children who have participated in early voting polling may want to speculate about the composition of the voters for this year's Bluebonnet Award. Perhaps they noticed in their own polling that the book that won had great strength with fourth graders or great strength among both boys and girls.

Above all, enjoy the process. And, please share other ideas by emailing Martha Edmundson at [mamedmund@yahoo.com](mailto:mamedmund@yahoo.com). The Bluebonnet Committee will compile these ideas to share with librarians next year.