

## Tips for Successful Candidates Debates or Events

1. Determine the audience. Consider co-sponsoring your event or invite other local schools to attend.
2. Encourage media coverage to reach a larger audience and to highlight your student's participation in the political process.
3. Choose the proposed date, location and format. Determine format based on the number of candidates involved, location, audience size, and media coverage. Brainstorm interesting and different formats which engage the audience. Communicate these basic details by a letter to the candidates and campaign coordinators.
4. Find an experienced moderator from the school or outside community.
5. Determine the best seating arrangements for the candidates, moderator, panelists, media, and timers to be in full view of each other and the audience. Make arrangements with technology classes for appropriate sound and lighting requirements.
6. Discuss plans with the moderator, including correspondence with candidates, finalization of format (including how questions will be solicited), ground rules, and moderator's needs and concerns.
7. Send formal written invitations to all qualified candidates. Invitations should outline:
  - a) Date
  - b) Time
  - c) Place
  - d) Format
  - e) Ground Rules
  - f) Name of Moderator
  - g) Reply Date Deadline
8. Include return forms on which the candidate should sign, stating that he/she agrees to the format and video policy, if the event is being taped.
9. Publicize your event as soon as you have key details in place. Use posters and morning announcements to generate excitement!
10. Recruit students to act as timers, ushers, question screeners, etc.
11. Locate necessary equipment and materials including school banner, time watches, timing signs, nametags, pencils, water, etc.

## Sample Formats for Candidates Events

1. **DEBATE:** A proposition is stated, candidates speak pro and con on the issue, rebut each other and give closing summary statements.
2. **FORUM:** Candidates answer oral or written questions from the audience or panelists usually following a prepared opening statement. They may or may not be allowed rebuttal.
3. **ROUND-ROBIN:** The audience is divided into small groups; candidates move from group to group. 'Discussion leaders' are provided in each group to keep things moving.
4. **FAIR:** Candidates are stationed at tables or boots around the room. The audience is free to talk with as many candidates as possible.

There are many variations on these formats. Choose one that works for the type of election, your community and the number of candidates and electoral districts that you wish to present. Determine time limits on the basis of the number of candidates.