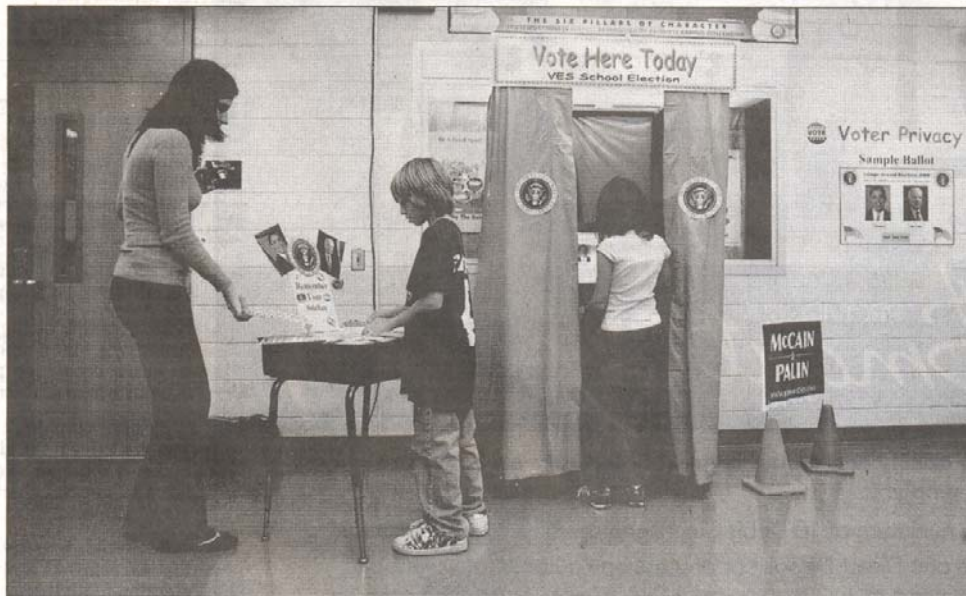




LOCAL A3
LEARNING
DEMOCRACY
Pupils hold mock election

CIVICS LESSON IN MONTGOMERY



Staff photos by Kathy Johnson

Fourth-graders in Amanda Steele's class at Village Elementary School in Montgomery participate in a mock presidential election, above, and make voting advertisements to share with parents.

Pupils learn democracy

By **PAMELA SROKA-HOLZMANN**
Staff Writer

MONTGOMERY — Despite being about nine years shy of voting age, Village Elementary School pupils have picked their presidential ticket of choice.

A mock election, created by computer resource teacher Jim Dolan a few years ago, followed a schoolwide concentration on the democratic process, incorporating social studies, reading and math skills. Yesterday and today, the pupils — all third- and fourth-graders — are casting their ballots in a voting booth using a computer database.

The results are scheduled to be tallied and released at the end of the school day on Election Day.

During a school morning news program which aired yesterday on about 36 classroom televisions, fourth-graders, acting as broadcasters, explained how to use the voting booth and the electoral process. The 4-minute morning news segment also touched on the right to privacy while casting votes.

In an interview between fourth-grader Lauren Mankow-



ski and Principal Susan Lacy and Vice Principal Al Hadinger, Lauren asked Hadinger who he planned to vote for in the presidential election.

Hadinger replied, "That's a great question. I don't think it would really be appropriate to tell you who I am voting for and the reason is, in the United States, we have a tradition of something called a 'secret ballot.'"

In 1892, Grover Cleveland became the first American president to be elected by the secret ballot, Hadinger noted.

"The secret ballot is a voting method that ensures that a voter's choice is kept confidential and that way a voter can make a decision that is a sincere and honest one," Lacy said. "So, when we vote, we let our

See **SCHOOL**, Page A4

School

From Page A3

community leaders know what our opinion is about how we want things done. So tomorrow, on Election Day, Americans will be voting for a leader of our country, and we'll make decisions about how our country will be governed."

Lacy noted voting is an American right, and that in some countries people are not allowed to vote.

"When you don't vote, you don't have the right to make a change. So you have to get out there and vote," she said.

To avoid sensitive topics associated with any election, Hadinger said the concentration was on the voting process rather than the child's political standpoint.

In fourth-grade teacher Amanda Steele's class, pupils are creating posters illustrating reasons why it's important to vote.

"It's more about understanding the electoral process and how understanding it is important to their lives and future," Steele

said.

In addition, the pupils have been shading in states on a map in red and blue markers to show their predictions on electoral votes. For Republican, they shade red and for Democrat, they shade blue, she said.

Tomorrow, the class will shade in the "results" on another map and compare their predictions, she said. Also tomorrow, the students plan to write down three things they would accomplish if they became president of the United States.

"I would tell people when they go shopping, to bring bags and use them over and over again," said Daniel Choi, 9, a fourth-grader.

Ashlyn Bickel, 9, another fourth grader said if she was the president she would focus on aiding animals.

"I would start a fund to help animals that need homes."

□ *Pamela Sroka-Holzmann:*
908-707-3155;
Psroka@MyCentralJersey.com
