

# School makes voting elementary

JESSICA SELBY

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COVENTRY — Although the general election isn't taking place until Tuesday, students and faculty at Tiogue School in Coventry placed their votes yesterday and Barack Obama was the winner in the presidential race.

Students and faculty participated in the school's first ever mock election. During their lunch breaks, they took to the polls, voting for president as well as members of Congress, the General Assembly, the town council and the school committee.

Voters assembled in classroom 10 where members of the school's PTA had created a mock election hall complete with anonymous voting booths — 19 of them; a greeter who checked the voters names as they came in to make sure they had registered; a ballot collector, Debbie Swanholm, a member of the PTA who spent much of the day tallying all of the votes as they came in; and a congratulator, Carol Williamson, Coventry Council PTA president, who passed out "I voted" stickers to everyone who voted.

At the end of the day, after all 388 students from kindergarten

through fifth grade and the majority of the faculty had voted, it appeared that Barack Obama had won the presidential race in the school's mock election by nearly 100 over John McCain.

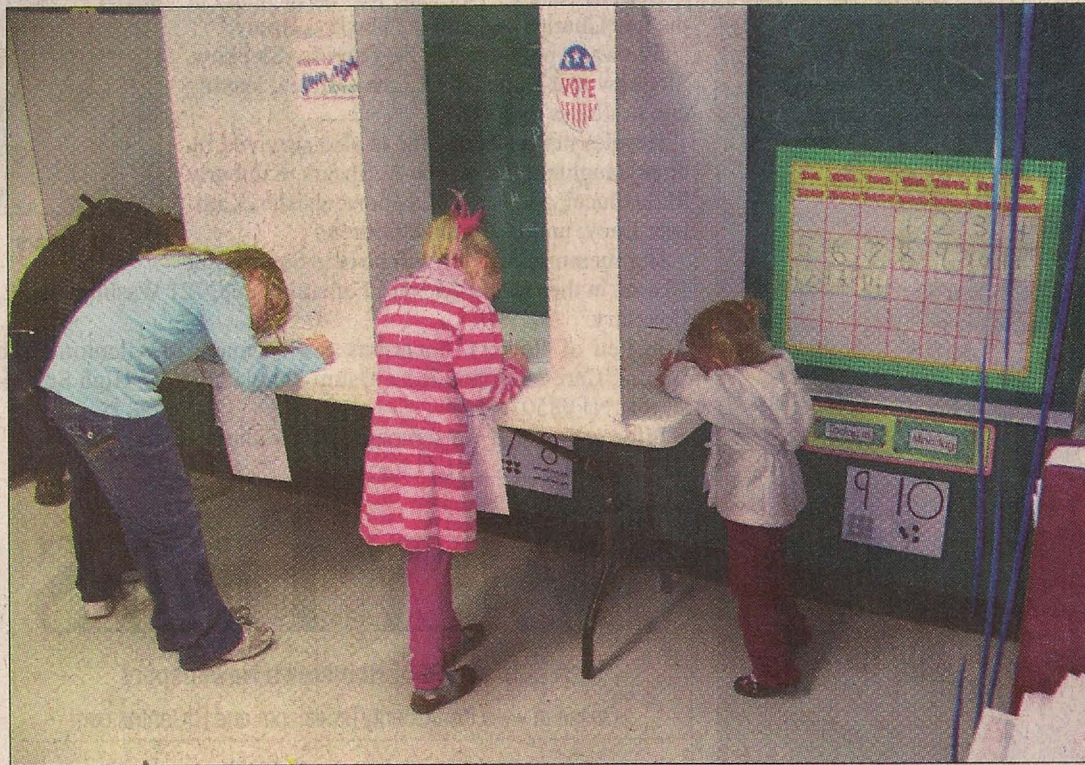
According to Williamson, the mock election was a big hit. All

the students were psyched up about participating in the electoral process and even more so about getting the results, she said.

After the results are announced they will be submitted to the national mock election


board, the organization that supported the school's election, Williamson said. Tiogue School's results would than be compared to those of other schools in the state that held

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All of Tiogue School's 388 students as well as its faculty went to the polls at school yesterday for the first time ever. Participants voted for president, members of Congress, the General Assembly, the town council and the school committee. Barack Obama clinched the presidential race.



Trevor Campbell and his fellow students from kindergarten through fifth grade participated in a mock election yesterday at Tiogue School in Coventry. The results of the school's election will be submitted to the national mock election board.

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similar elections and then to schools around the country, she said. Those results, she said she planned to post at the front of the school in the foyer. This, Williamson said, was very exciting for the students.

They were anxious to see how their decisions corresponded to other schools and their students, she said.

"Even though this doesn't really count in the big election, I think that this is really nice that they are letting us vote," said Samantha Schaller, a fifth-grade student in Susan Flynn's class at Tiogue School. "I think that kids should have a say in who is president because the president can make all kinds of decisions and change a lot of things."

The students didn't go into that election blindly. According to Williamson, the teachers at the school were all provided with curriculum books that taught about citizenship, polit-

ical parties, platforms, the electoral process and the candidates. The books were purchased by the school's PTA from Scholastic Books, she said.

Susan Flynn, a fifth-grade teacher at the school said she and her students spent many hours over the past two months preparing for the election as well as learning about politics and government.

Shania Moretti, a student in Flynn's class, said her class read a lot about each of the candidates and about what they want to do if elected president.

Trevor Campbell, also in Flynn's class, said they looked at how the candidates planned to approach the war in Iraq and the environment.

Tanner Dupre of Flynn's class said they also learned about the candidates' stances on the economy.

Some of Flynn's students said, in addition to what they were doing in their classroom, they were also watching the

presidential debates at home with their parents and they didn't find them boring either.

The students also got a visit earlier this week from Secretary of State Ralph Mollis. During his visit, Williamson said, Mollis talked with the students about why it is so important to vote, about the differences between the candidates and the two parties, and also a little bit about what his office does to prepare for the election. The students also had a number of questions for Mollis, she said. They asked questions about the difference between a mayor, a governor and a president and about how these people are selected, Williamson said.

The entire program was adapted into every grade's curriculum and will culminate with the actual election on Tuesday, according to Williamson. The winners in the other races, for Congress, General Assembly, town council and school committee will be announced later this week, she said.



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