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18-year-old elected as US mayor

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Contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading	7
Discussion	8
Speaking	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

13 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

18-year-old elected as US mayor

An 18-year-old high school student has become mayor of his hometown in the US state of Michigan. Michael Sessions won a local election by just two votes to beat his only rival, the 51-year-old former mayor. Mr. Sessions said the votes of his parents gave him his election success. He will now have to balance his schedules. He has to attend school classes between 8am to 3pm and do his new job as mayor before dinner at 6pm. He aims to deliver on his three campaign promises. These were to increase the town's full-time firefighters from three to four, help the local economy and listen to citizens' problems.

Mr. Sessions was too young to enter the election when it was first announced – he turned 18 only in September. He had just four weeks of campaigning. He had a budget of just \$700, which he made from his summer job of selling toffee apples. His new position does not come with an office. Instead, he will receive \$3,600 a year to cover his expenses. He starts his four-year position on November 21. Although he is the youngest elected official in America, he cannot celebrate his success with champagne. The legal drinking age in the US is 21, so he would be arrested for underage drinking.

WARM-UPS

1. BEING 18: In pairs / groups, discuss what life is like for an 18-year-old in your country. Do you think being 18 is one of the best stages of a person's life? Were /Are you happy being 18? Do you think today's 18-year-olds are different from those of 20 or 30 years ago?

2. WORLD TEENAGERS: Are 18-year-olds the same all over the world? With your partner(s), discuss what you think the differences are between teenagers and their lifestyles in the following countries:

- The USA
- Saudi Arabia
- Japan
- India
- Kenya
- China
- Italy
- Iraq
- Liberia
- Brazil

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Local elections / mayors / hometowns / rivals / parents / balancing schedules / dinner / firefighters / problems / champagne / underage drinking / apples

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ELECTION: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "election". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. MAYOR OPINIONS: Discuss these opinions on 18-year-old mayors:

1. An 18-year-old should never be able to become mayor.
2. A younger person would provide a fresh approach to politics.
3. Younger politicians better understand the needs of young people.
4. No one under the age of 30 should be allowed to run for public office.
5. The fact that an 18-year-old has won an election means the other candidates were of a poor quality.
6. Having an 18-year-old as mayor is an interesting experiment.
7. It could only happen in America.
8. An 18-year-old will take risks and make decisions older people are too afraid to. That is good.

6. YOUNG OR OLD? Have a quick debate with your partner. Is it better for an 18-year-old or an 80-year-old to become mayor? Students A think an 18-year-old would be a better mayor, Students B think an 80-year-old would be more able.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. An 18-year-old has been elected mayor of New York City. | T / F |
| b. The teenager won by a very slim margin. | T / F |
| c. The teenager wants to teach people how to balance different jobs. | T / F |
| d. The young mayor wants to hire one more firefighter for his town. | T / F |
| e. The 18-year-old campaigned very hard for six months. | T / F |
| f. The new mayor gets an office ten times the size of his bedroom. | T / F |
| g. The new mayor gets a \$36,000 a year salary. | T / F |
| h. The teenager was arrested at his victory party for underage drinking. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| a. just | go to |
| b. beat | pay for |
| c. attend | declared |
| d. aims | defeat |
| e. problems | drink to |
| f. announced | civil servant |
| g. position | only |
| h. cover | role |
| i. official | complaints |
| j. celebrate | intends |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. mayor of his hometown in | 18 only in September |
| b. Sessions won a local election | local economy |
| c. beat | by just two votes |
| d. He aims to deliver on | does not come with an office |
| e. help the | his three campaign promises |
| f. he turned | the US state of Michigan |
| g. He had a budget | to cover his expenses |
| h. His new position | underage drinking |
| i. he will receive \$3,600 a year | of just \$700 |
| j. arrested for | his only rival |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

18-year-old elected as US mayor

An 18-year-old high school student has _____ mayor of his hometown in the US state of Michigan. Michael Sessions won a _____ election by just two votes to _____ his only rival, the 51-year-old former mayor. Mr. Sessions said the votes of his parents gave him his election _____. He will now have to balance his _____. He has to attend school classes between 8am to 3pm and do his new job as mayor before dinner at 6pm. He _____ to deliver on his three campaign promises. These were to _____ the town's full-time firefighters from three to four, help the local economy and _____ to citizens' problems.

Mr. Sessions was too young to _____ the election when it was first announced – he _____ 18 only in September. He had just four weeks of campaigning. He had a _____ of just \$700, which he made from his summer job of selling toffee apples. His new _____ does not come with an office. Instead, he will _____ \$3,600 a year to cover his expenses. He starts his four-year position on November 21. Although he is the youngest _____ official in America, he cannot _____ his success with champagne. The legal drinking age in the US is 21, so he would be arrested for _____ drinking.

success
beat
listen
become
increase
schedules
local
aims
celebrate
position
turned
receive
underage
enter
elected
budget

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

18-year-old elected as US mayor

An 18-year-old high school student _____ mayor of his hometown in the US state of Michigan. Michael Sessions won a local election _____ votes to beat his only rival, the 51-year-old former mayor. Mr. Sessions said the votes of his parents gave him his election _____. He will now have to balance his schedules. He has to attend school classes between 8am to 3pm and do his new _____ before dinner at 6pm. He aims to deliver on his three campaign promises. These were to _____ the town's full-time firefighters from three to four, help the local economy and listen to _____ problems.

Mr. Sessions was too young to enter the election when it _____ announced – he turned 18 only in September. He had _____ four weeks of campaigning. He had a _____ of just \$700, which he made from his summer job of selling toffee apples. His new position does not come _____ _____. Instead, he will receive \$3,600 a year to _____ his expenses. He starts his four-year position on November 21. Although he is the youngest elected official in America, he cannot _____ his success with champagne. The legal drinking age in the US is 21, so he would be arrested for _____ drinking.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'local' and 'election'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "18-YEAR-OLDS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about teenagers and the contributions they can make to society.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- hometown
- rival
- parents
- balance
- promises
- problems
- young
- \$700
- office
- \$3,600
- November 21
- arrested

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What did you think when you first read the headline?
- c. Would you vote for an 18-year-old to be mayor of your town?
- d. Do you think an 18-year-old can be a successful mayor?
- e. What advantages are there in having a mayor who is just 18?
- f. Do you think an 18-year-old could become President of the USA?
- g. Who do you think would be a better US President, George W. Bush or 18-year-old Michael Sessions?
- h. How different do you think the world would be with an 18-year-old US President?
- i. What changes are needed in your town?
- j. How and where do you talk about your problems?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What things do you think an 18-year-old would campaign for or against?
- d. Which is more important for the new mayor, finishing his homework or doing his job as mayor?
- e. What do you know about the mayor of your town?
- f. Would you like to see more young people enter politics?
- g. Do you think Michael Sessions should have been allowed to have a drink to celebrate his election success?
- h. Do you think you would be a good mayor?
- i. What things do you have to balance every day?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

18 OR 80? Would an 18-year-old or an 80-year-old be a better political leader? In pairs / groups, discuss the decisions each is likely to make on the following areas.

AREAS	18-YEAR-OLD'S DECISIONS	80-YEAR-OLD'S DECISIONS
The war on terror		
Education		
Taxation		
Pensions		
Crime		
Foreign policy		
Other _____		

- Change partners and tell each other what you wrote.
- Which of the decisions do you agree with most?
- Would you vote for the teenager or the senior citizen?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the mayor of your town. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. ME FOR MAYOR: Make a poster explaining the things you want to do for your town if you became mayor. Describe the problems your town has. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all want to do similar things?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to the newly elected 18-year-old mayor Michael Sessions. Tell him what you think of his election victory. Give him advice for the challenges ahead. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things or give similar advice?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. T e. F f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| a. just | only |
| b. beat | defeat |
| c. attend | go to |
| d. aims | intends |
| e. problems | complaints |
| f. announced | declared |
| g. position | role |
| h. cover | pay for |
| i. official | civil servant |
| j. celebrate | drink to |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. mayor of his hometown in | the US state of Michigan |
| b. Sessions won a local election | by just two votes |
| c. beat | his only rival |
| d. He aims to deliver on | his three campaign promises |
| e. help the | local economy |
| f. he turned | 18 only in September |
| g. He had a budget | of just \$700 |
| h. His new position | does not come with an office |
| i. he will receive \$3,600 a year | to cover his expenses |
| j. arrested for | underage drinking |

GAP FILL:

18-year-old elected as US mayor

An 18-year-old high school student has **become** mayor of his hometown in the US state of Michigan. Michael Sessions won a **local** election by just two votes to **beat** his only rival, the 51-year-old former mayor. Mr. Sessions said the votes of his parents gave him his election **success**. He will now have to balance his **schedules**. He has to attend school classes between 8am to 3pm and do his new job as mayor before dinner at 6pm. He **aims** to deliver on his three campaign promises. These were to **increase** the town's full-time firefighters from three to four, help the local economy and **listen** to citizens' problems.

Mr. Sessions was too young to **enter** the election when it was first announced – he **turned** 18 only in September. He had just four weeks of campaigning. He had a **budget** of just \$700, which he made from his summer job of selling toffee apples. His new **position** does not come with an office. Instead, he will **receive** \$3,600 a year to cover his expenses. He starts his four-year position on November 21. Although he is the youngest **elected** official in America, he cannot **celebrate** his success with champagne. The legal drinking age in the US is 21, so he would be arrested for **underage** drinking.