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***Rand McNally Launches “Play the Election” Digital Learning Game for Students***

*Plus: Rand McNally and USA TODAY Education announce new short essay contest, “Dear Mr. President” sponsored by WorldStrides*

**SKOKIE, Ill., August 28, 2012** – Today, Rand McNally launches “[Play the Election](#)” – a free collaborative, online tool that teaches students about the [2012 Presidential Election](#) and election process through games, resources and competition. And while students are learning about electing the President, they can write to him with their concerns in a new essay contest open to 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade students ages 13 to 20 years old, entitled “[Dear Mr. President](#)”.

“Play the Election” Digital Learning Game

“Play the Election” is an engaging community driven experience that helps students learn about the election process through a series interactive games and competition. Students predict the election winners for each state on an interactive election map, and compare their predictions to their class and the country to see where they rank. The program also includes eleven digital mini-games that delve deeper into influential and battleground states, like Ohio and Florida.

An accompanying online teacher resource center includes lesson plans based on the Common Core Standards making it easy to integrate the games and activities into the classroom.

“The ‘Play the Election’ content and the ‘Dear Mr. President’ essay contest advance Rand McNally’s goals of creating tools to enhance Social Studies, Geography and Civics education – all areas that have experienced curriculum cuts in recent years,” stated Dave Muscatel, CEO of Rand McNally. “With ‘Play the Election,’ we are leveraging the power of technology to engage

kids about the election process and educating them about the issues that are impacting our country.”

#### *Key Features of “Play the Election” Digital Learning Game*

- Interactive electoral map – Breaks down the Electoral College by state, details past election results, real-time polling data, election-related headlines, and more.
- Digital Mini-Games – Students can choose from eleven different mini-games that reinforce key concepts of the election, delve deeper into the issues of influential and battleground states, and tie core civics curriculum to current events.
- Standards-aligned lesson plans – Professionally-created lesson plans for educators that cover key aspects of the 2012 Election, the Electoral College, and major debates.
- Student Access – Each student creates their own unique profile that allows them to save and edit their own electoral map, play and track their progress through the games, and see how their answers stack up against those of others in their class or the country.
- Create Your Own Games – Teachers can create their own mini-games to reinforce key concepts or to teach new, related events.

“Play the Election” was created in collaboration with ImpactGames and is powered by ImpactGames’ Knight News Game award winning platform.

#### “Dear Mr. President” Essay Contest

As America prepares to elect its President, Rand McNally and USA TODAY Education invite students in the 7-12<sup>th</sup> grades to tell our President what’s on their minds via Rand McNally’s

[“Dear Mr. President”](#) essay contest, running from August 15 through November 27, 2012.

Maybe it’s climate change, or the challenges of managing our scarce natural resources. Or is it health care, the cost of college, or possibly the economy?

As technology has made the world smaller, the ability to think critically about global and local issues has become an important skill for 21<sup>st</sup> century life. Rand McNally’s mission is to provide students with a love for geography and discovery, and also to provide them with a platform to express ideas about the issues they believe will shape their own futures.

From the submitted essays, ten finalists (five from 7-9<sup>th</sup> grade submissions and five from the 10-12<sup>th</sup> grade submissions) will receive a three-day, two-night WorldStrides DiscoverNOW! trip for two to Washington, D.C. The trip is sponsored by WorldStrides, the global leader in accredited educational travel programs. In addition, the finalists will have their essays published in a “Dear Mr. President” ebook and on USA TODAY’s Education website, [www.education.usatoday.com](http://www.education.usatoday.com).

“The ‘Dear Mr. President’ essay contest is a wonderful opportunity to provide students with another avenue to strengthen their social studies education while engaging them in topics that are important to our nation’s future,” said WorldStrides CEO Jim Hall. “We are proud to sponsor this contest as it further supports WorldStrides’ core mission of enriching students’ lives through experiential travel and our belief in enriching the educational experience of our nation’s youth.”

Two Grand Prize winners will be chosen, one from the 7-9<sup>th</sup> grade finalist entries and one from the 10-12<sup>th</sup> grade finalist entries. Each Grand Prize winner will receive a \$5,000 529 Scholarship. The schools for the Grand Prize winners will each receive \$5,000 of Rand McNally product.

Play the Election and more detailed information and complete contest rules for “Dear Mr. President” are available at [www.randmcnally.com/dearmrpresident](http://www.randmcnally.com/dearmrpresident).

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national conversation. USA TODAY, the nation's number one newspaper in print circulation with an average of nearly 1.8 million daily, and USATODAY.com, an award-winning newspaper website launched in 1995, reach a combined 5.4 million readers daily. USA TODAY is a leader in mobile applications with more than ten million downloads on mobile devices. The USA TODAY brand also includes USA TODAY Education and USA TODAY Sports Weekly. USA TODAY is owned by Gannett Co., Inc. (NYSE: GCI).

**About WorldStrides** – WorldStrides is the nation's largest and most trusted student travel organization, having inspired more than four million students with interactive and educational travel experiences across the United States and worldwide. Founded 45 years ago by a Chicago school teacher, WorldStrides has grown to a team of more than 500 professionals in the United States, Canada, China, and the United Kingdom dedicated to delivering life-changing experiences and improving the way students learn. WorldStrides' group travel offerings fall under four major brands: [WorldStrides DiscoverNow! programs](#), [WorldStrides Heritage Performance programs](#), [WorldStrides Capstone programs](#), and the International Division of WorldStrides: [Casterbridge Tours](#), and [NETC](#). In addition, WorldStrides introduced its [New Worlds Emerge](#) programs for individual travelers at the high school level in 2012.

**About ImpactGames** - Pittsburgh-based ImpactGames (<http://www.impactgames.com>) is a world-renowned pioneer in creating compelling interactive experiences around current events and socially responsible issues. ImpactGames focuses on the use of innovative games and technology to create awareness and educate users. ImpactGames' catalog includes [Peacemaker](#), winner of the USC's "Reinventing Public Diplomacy through Games" Contest and winner of the "Best Transformation Game" award at the Games for Change Annual Contest, and [Play the News](#), winner of the 2009 Knight Foundation Award for News Gaming. ImpactGames is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hybrid Learning Systems.