

Growing Voters and Election 2008

Activity Title: Create "Why Vote" pamphlet

Grades: Middle School and High School

Overview

In this activity, students will create and use their own materials to learn about the voting process, explore the reasons that people should vote, and take part in a community drive to promote voting. Students will learn through direct hands-on experience why voting is important and become aware of why some citizens decide not to vote. Once students are distributing their pamphlets and speaking to voters in their community, students are participating in the actual political process even before reaching voting age.

This activity can be expanded or reduced to make it appropriate for a range of grades.

National Social Studies Standards NSS-C.5-8.5 ROLES OF THE CITIZEN

What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

- ◆ What is citizenship?
- ◆ What are the rights of citizens?
- ◆ What are the responsibilities of citizens?

Essential Question

Many people who fail to vote state that due to the huge population in the United States their one vote will fail to make a difference; therefore, voting is a waste of time. Why should people vote, and do their votes make a difference?

Objectives

- * Students will identify reasons that people should vote.
- * Students will gain a basic understanding of how the election process works.
- * Students will become familiar with the qualifications for voting.
- * Students will understand that voting is a privilege and a responsibility of a U.S. citizen
- * Students will recognize the importance of voting within a democracy.
- * Students will suggest ways to increase voter participation.
- * Students will be aware of the steps involved in registering to vote.
- * Students will identify various ways to register to vote (local registration, on the Web, through the department of motor vehicles, by mail).
- * Students will be aware of reasons for voting in elections.

1. Ask students if they have ever voted. Allow students to brainstorm voting situations at school, at home in family decisions, at clubs or places of worship, etc.
2. Students will explore websites on voting (see resource list) and draft a class poster outlining reasons to vote. The poster can include graphics and quotes from a political

figure that pertains to the theme.

3. Students will work in teams to develop pamphlets that outline reasons to vote and the steps involved in preparing to vote. (This can be done in Microsoft Word or using PowerPoint).

- * *Why* vote

- * *How* to vote

- * Basic information about what people are voting on: choosing a party, types of elected officials, information on the history of voting in the US, etc.

Pamphlets will include graphics and texts, as well as local phone numbers for helpful information. Directions for first time voters can be included. Copies will be made of the brochures and if possible, registration cards attached.

(Local board of elections will likely provide registration cards upon request.)

5. Students will develop PowerPoint presentations that show the first time voter what to expect when he/she visits the voting booth. Information will include:

- a. how to prepare to vote

- b. how to find out where you vote

- c. how to sign in

- d. what to do when you make an error on your ballot

- e. what to do when you don't know understand the ballot

- f. how to turn in your ballot

Extension: consider putting these instructions in more than one language, appropriate to your community or to use in collaboration across communities.

6. Presentations can be uploaded to an online blog or to a sharing site like photostory.com.