



Teaching for Democracy Alliance

A national alliance working to strengthen student learning about elections and informed voting.

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

The Teaching for Democracy Alliance consists of organizations working together to equip teachers and administrators to talk about elections & voting in a safe, productive and educational way to provide students with long-term civic engagement tools.

The Teaching for Democracy Alliance is leveraging existing, high quality materials for professional development opportunities for teachers. The alliance was established as a strong collective voice for democratic learning to better equip teachers to bring practical democracy lessons to their students, especially in a tense political year.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE ALLIANCE

- An informed citizenry is important and can be cultivated early through civic learning,
- All students need access to opportunities to learn about core democratic processes like elections and voting,
- A variety of high quality and culturally relevant resources are needed to reach all teachers and students, and
- It's important for student learning to acknowledge political actors to model democratic practice.

ALLIANCE MEMBER RESOURCES

A curated collection of high quality resources for teaching about elections and voting at the K12 level.

www.teachingfordemocracy.org

CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEADERS



Identify

Determine a point person on your staff who can coordinate school/district efforts and develop a working group that includes students at each grade level. This person can find out about what has been done at the school or district in the past related to local, state, and national elections.



Discuss

Talk with your Social Studies and ELA teachers about which best practices they have previously implemented and what resources might be needed in order for them to implement additional best practices.



Assess

Complete the Teaching about Elections & Voting Self-Assessment Matrix with a group of social studies and ELA teachers to determine how many best practices (i.e. columns) your school/district is implementing with respect to elections and voting and how broadly.



Plan

As a school/district develop a plan for including at least one more column of the matrix in your election-related activities.



Engage Community

Connect with local youth and civic organizations to identify any existing resources or support, as well as feedback on your plan.



Implement

Execute the plan. Share a version with us (abby.kiesa@tufts.edu) and we may post it as an example to the Alliance website.

Teaching about Elections & Voting Self-Assessment Matrix

	Voter Registration or pre-registration opportunities are widespread	Voting and Timely Election-Related Content in the classroom or as homework (any elected office)	Media Literacy skill development embedded with elections and voting topics	Classroom Discussion with a commitment to all voices, creating space for disagreement	Action Civics and other Experiential Learning	Teacher Support and Resources
Teacher	Provide concrete registration information & opportunities in the classroom; bring in League of Women Voters, the Civics Center, or other non-partisan voter registration organization to support this work.	Study history of voting rights; follow news about the election (at any level); assign students to watch debates and discuss; assign games that simulate real life elections or campaigns.	Use an activity that meshes media literacy skill development and election/voting content in various formats, such as youth media creation that includes print, visual, audio, or digital elements.	Assign and facilitate discussion and deliberation of local or national issues or ballot initiatives; teach students about deliberation. Seek opportunities for training in controversial issue discussion.	Enable students to work or observe polls on Election Day; register and mobilize voters; support non- or bipartisan campaigning; invite candidates to speak with students. Advise or start a club that facilitates student involvement in school governance and/or community issues and/or share information about such opportunities with students.	Share instructional resources about elections and voting with other teachers. Participate in professional learning experiences about elections and voting.
School	Offer concrete information and opportunities to register for all those eligible (more than a blast email and forms in the main office). Explicitly support efforts to register students to vote.	Include elections-related content and activities in all social studies and ELA classes, and support these activities school wide.	Ensure that teachers are aware of resources that support student media literacy application relative to elections and voting. Amplify media created by youth in support of election engagement and voting.	Explicitly support classroom discussion. ("Support" is defined broadly.) Provide training on classroom discussion for teachers. Provide discussion activities in all social studies classes about timely material or connecting history to today's election topics.	Actively seek out ways in which students can meaningfully participate or have a voice in school governance, through student council, school newspapers, and others.	Distribute resources on teaching about elections and voting to all social studies and ELA teachers. Dedicate a PD day to best practices. Train social studies and ELA teachers on discussions of current controversial issues.
District	Provide all students who are eligible with concrete information and opportunities to register (more than a blast email and forms in the main office) in every high school in the district.	Include elections-related content and activities in all social studies classes or in a combination of social studies and ELA or other classes district-wide.	Create avenues for students to post student-created media items and share throughout the district.	Explicitly support classroom discussion with resources, when appropriate, and potentially accompanied by a letter of support.	Support and, if needed, establish opportunities and systems for student participation in district governance (e.g., student advisor to the school board) and policies (e.g., student evaluation of teachers).	Show explicit support for teachers talking about elections and voting; distribute resources on teaching about elections and voting to all social studies and ELA teachers; offer training on discussion for social studies and ELA teachers.

This matrix is based on research about best practices in high quality civics education in the K-12 context.

