

9 Time to Vote!

Students will communicate personal priorities that impact voting decisions.

(30 - 45 minutes)

Discussion

Each person gains knowledge and opinions through a process called socialization. Very little political socialization comes through formal education. The Primary influences are the informal learning children are exposed to every day.

1. Families have the greatest impact on a person's opinions and beliefs.
2. Mass media have always been an influence, but in today's society they are much more so because of the larger role of technology. Kids are constantly inundated with media messages on TV and the Internet.
3. Schools teach national loyalty and support basic values. American schools were established to promote the democratic ideals that are the foundation of our country. Civics education is a requirement for graduation in Washington for the same reason. Each new generation must learn their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Elementary, Middle & High School Lesson

1. Review the study comparing youth voter priorities to older adults (p. 49). Ask students to brainstorm issues they personally care about (such as gas taxes, entry level jobs and wages, education funding, bike lanes, college tuition, standardized testing, etc.) and write their responses on the board. Explain these issues are controversial because there are many perspectives, none of which are necessarily right or wrong.
2. Have each student prioritize the five issues most important to them (p. 50).
3. Ask students to identify what else influences voters. When considering a candidate, does party preference matter? What about a candidate's education, experience, or personal history? Is a candidate's personality or appearance a factor? Have students prioritize these and other candidate qualifiers.



Primary Sources

Youth voter priorities study by Pew (p. 49)

Voters' Pamphlet

- current and archived pamphlets since 1914 are available online at www.vote.wa.gov under the "research" tab

Mock Election

Voters' Guide

- real ballot measures written at a lower reading level, available online at vote.wa.gov/MockElection

socialization

to give somebody the skills or knowledge required to function successfully in a society

priority

something that is more important than others

mass media

communication that reaches large audiences, especially television, radio, newspapers, and Internet

- Have each student draw a pie chart on the worksheet (p. 50). Students should look at their top priorities and decide, of the 10 listed, which four or five are the most likely to influence their vote. On the pie chart, students can demonstrate what weight each priority carries in their voting decisions.

Vote in the Mock Election

- Download Mock Election materials at www.vote.wa.gov/MockElection in October.
- No pre-registration is necessary. Voting is free to all Washington public, private, tribal, and homeschool students in grades K-12. Younger students are given a reading-level appropriate ballot.
- After deciding which candidates and measures to support, ask students to vote in the annual Mock Election.
- Tally and report results as part of the lesson. Compare Mock Election results to the real election results in November.

Older Voters More Likely to Prioritize Foreign Policy, Immigration

% of registered voters saying each is "very important" to their vote for Congress


	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	Young-old diff
	%	%	%	%	
Foreign policy	51	60	70	71	-20
Immigration	49	58	65	69	-20
Terrorism	68	70	79	82	-14
Health care	69	78	78	79	-10
Economy	75	84	85	83	-8
Federal budget deficit	62	63	66	70	-8
Abortion	50	44	44	50	0
Gay marriage	38	35	30	30	+8
Birth control	44	36	32	37	+7
Economic inequality	68	57	53	55	+13
Environment	64	55	52	48	+16

Survey conducted September 2-9, 2014. Based on registered voters.

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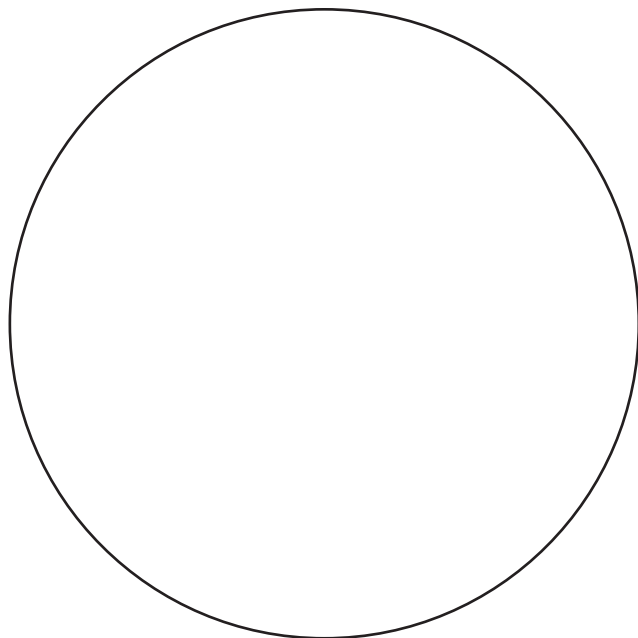
Time to Vote

Before you vote, decide what's important to you.



<p>What issues do I care about?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.	<p>What qualities do I look for in a candidate?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3.4.5.
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Draw a pie-chart to show how much each priority influences your voting decisions.



Homework

Ask students to discuss their voting decisions with an adult, then write down their thoughts after the conversation.

What issues are they most passionate about? Why?

What personal priorities dictate their voting choices (family, money, ethics, etc.)?

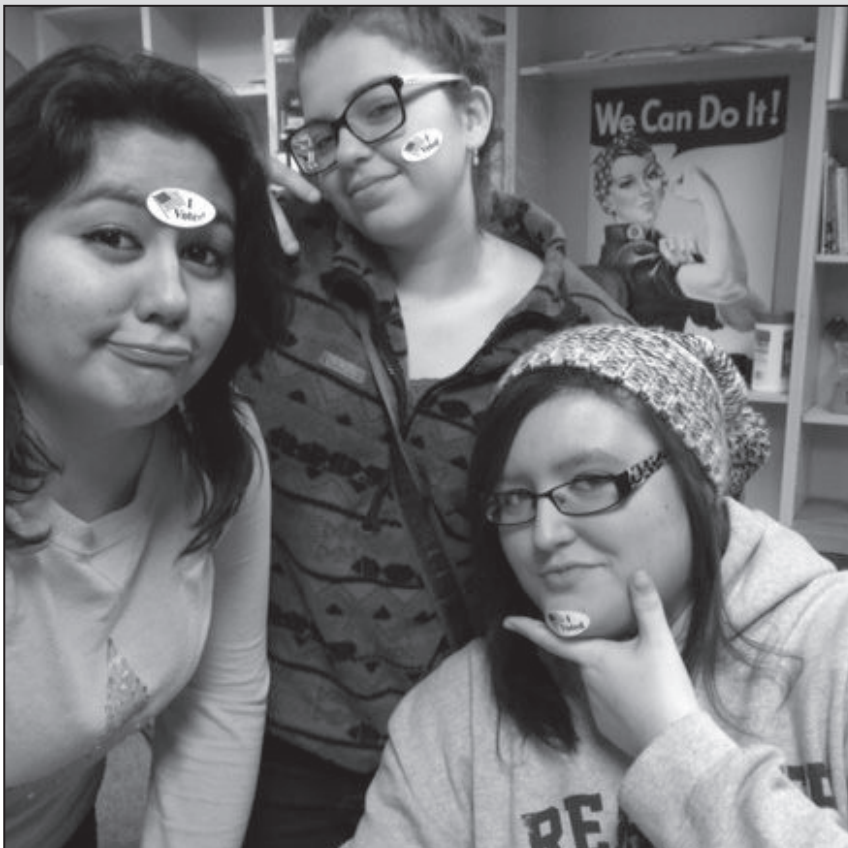
What qualities do they look for in a candidate?

Assessment Questions

Elementary: Australia requires voting because they feel it is a citizen's responsibility. Voters in the United States think voting is a right and they should get to choose whether or not they vote. What do you think?

Middle & High School (students may choose):

1. Every five years, the American Community Survey is used to determine which regions need translated ballots. Should the population of non-English speakers be reassessed more frequently (say every two years)? Why or why not?
2. Look at the chart (p. 49). Young people have significantly different values than older Americans. Do you think allowing 17-year-olds to vote in the Primary when they will be 18 years old for the General Election will result in candidates that better represent youth priorities?



◀ Mock Election voters at Cascade High School, Leavenworth