

# Get Out the Vote Campaign

**Grade(s):**  
3–12

**Time:**  
2–3 weeks

**Subject(s):**  
Social Studies  
Language Arts

## Standards

### Social Studies

Students will be able to exercise the participatory skills needed to monitor political events, promote public understanding, and influence politics and governance.

Students will understand how the American political system provides for both choice and opportunities for participation.

### Language Arts

Students will read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They will draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed, including generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, and comparing information from several sources.

## OVERVIEW

Students gain an understanding of why it is important to vote. They learn about the struggle for voting rights in the United States, and strategize ways to get the public to the polls on Election Day. As a class, or in small groups, they select and carry out a strategy to get more people in their precinct to vote this year than did in 2000.

**Driving Question:** How can we promote the vote and get more people to the polls this year than went in 2000?

**Skills and Knowledge:** Electoral history, writing, collaborating, citizenship

**Co-nect Rubric:** Project Report

**Final Product:** Students organize and implement a Get Out the Vote Campaign in their community

## INSTRUCTION

### Learning Voting and Voting Rights

Have students research the history of voting and the struggles for voting rights. Students can create a timeline of voting rights depicting when different groups in the United States won the right to vote, with information collected from books, Web sites, and other resources. The timeline might include amendments XV (suffrage for all races), XVII (mandating the popular vote), XIX (suffrage for women), XXIII (suffrage for residents of the District of Columbia), XXIV (abolishment of poll tax), XXVI (suffrage for people 18 years and older).

Discuss with students and have them write about the importance of voting. Have students brainstorm a bulleted list of reasons why voting is important.

Have students look at voting statistics that they research from books, organizations (such as the League of Women Voters), and Web sites. Students can then analyze the data looking at voting trends in different groups, such as race, economic status, or education. Have students look at national, state, and local voting data, if possible.

### Needs Assessment—Why Aren't More People Voting?

Have students look at voting records from their precinct. Look at the records noting how many people didn't vote in 2000. Have students brainstorm potential reasons why more people don't vote. Some reasons might include:

- ❑ Not enough information (about how to vote, about candidates/issues)

- Apathy
- Too busy
- Lack of transportation
- Not registered

Have students look at the reasons and discuss which ones they might be able to affect.

### **Brainstorm Ways to Get More People to Vote**

Have students brainstorm possible ways to increase the number of people in their precinct who vote. Ask them initially to come up with as many methods of increasing voter turnout as possible, regardless of feasibility. Some possible strategies might include:

- Reminders
- Phone calls
- Door-to-door campaigns
- Postcard mailings highlighting key issues of local interest
- Voter registration drive (if it's not too late)
- Voter information brochures highlighting candidates and issues
- Carpooling service
- Walking escort service to polls
- Map of polling sites
- Mock polls to help voters become comfortable with the process

Have students select the activities that are the most feasible and will have the greatest impact, given time and resources.

### **Tapping into Community Resources**

Have students look to community groups and organizations for potential resources or connections. For example, voter's rights groups may help by providing postage for informational mailings or some groups may have experience organizing transportation to polls, etc. Have students research such groups and write letters and e-mails, or make phone calls soliciting their support.

### **Planning the Get Out the Vote Campaign**

At this point, students can make concrete plans for their Get Out the Vote Campaign. Have students determine what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and who is going to do it. Divide students into groups, with each group responsible for a different aspect of the plan. Do flyers, banners, brochures, etc., need to be produced? Who needs to be working on those? When do they need to be done? Who will distribute them? How? What other ways can we get the message out?

### **Get the Message Out!**

Students can work in their groups on various aspects of the campaign. Some students can create signs and banners, flyers, brochures, etc. Some students may address envelopes for mailings or deliver them door-to-door. Perhaps students will set up informational booths at shopping centers or malls. Some students may create a Public Service

Announcement to be aired on local radio or TV stations. Others may work along with a community group to help organize a volunteer carpooling service to polls. Other possible activities or products could include posters, skits, Web sites, videos, and community forums organized and hosted by students.

### **Election Day Activities**

Election day itself will be an exciting time with the culmination of many parts of the project. In addition to last minute organizing and distribution of materials, students can be involved in several different activities. During and after the actual election, students can monitor the media coverage of the election to get a sense of voter participation. Students can compare their community's voting rates with those in past elections and consider if their project made a difference.

Students can conduct exit polls and ask voters what made them decide to come out to vote. Students can also continue the project by beginning a more substantial voter registration drive for future elections.

Shortly after the election, students should be able to get the statistics from their precinct to see if their campaign made an impact.

### **Reflection**

To end the project, have students reflect on what they've learned about voting, the election process, democracy, and other key project concepts. Have them also reflect on what they accomplished in the project. Do they think they actually made a difference? Did they get more people to get out and vote? Did they inform people on the candidates and issues? What would they do differently next time in order to make the project more meaningful, more exciting, more fun, and more of a learning experience? Perhaps students can poll community members who were involved to get their feedback. Students can create a Web site documenting the project, their reflections and insights. The site also could continue as an informational service to the community.

## **RESOURCES**

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Get Out the Vote

<http://www.civicactions.org/cgi-bin/wiki.pl?GetOutTheVote>

Rock the Vote

<http://www.rockthevote.com/>