

## **Kids Voting USA Program in Classrooms/Schools/Districts**

### **Why Kids Voting USA?**

The U.S. trails most developed countries in voter turnout. In this program, students in grades K-12 learn about the impact of voting, how to consume news critically, and what an informed citizen who participates in democracy does. And, parents get caught up in their child's enthusiasm for politics, often resulting in higher voter turnout.

### **Three Components of the Kids Voting USA Civics Program**

#### **1. The Kids Voting USA Curriculum K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12**

The Kids Voting USA program is designed to be flexible and easy to incorporate into existing lesson plans. Within each age grouping, activities are divided into four major themes. All activities are available online and each teacher has an individual login.

**Elections and Voting:** The intent of this theme is to educate students about elections, from gaining an appreciation of the power of voting including what suffrage is and why it is an important concept today, to understanding the registration process and participating in an election. The theme's activities fall under three concepts: My Vote Gives Me Power; I Register and Vote; and Suffrage Then and Now.

**Democracy and the People:** The intent of this theme is to provide an understanding of, and a context for, American democracy and citizenship—from the rights and responsibilities of students in their local, state and national communities to the world beyond. The theme's activities fall under four concepts: What is Democracy?; Democracy in America; A Citizen's Rights and Responsibilities; and Democracy in the World.

**Informed Citizen:** The intent of this theme is for students to learn how to evaluate information, intelligently form decisions, and communicate positions to others. The theme's activities fall under three concepts: I Study the Candidates and Issues; Gathering and Weighing Information; and Technology/Media Literacy.

**Civic Engagement/Service Learning:** The intent of this theme is for students to practice the skills of democratic living as they learn important civic lessons in the classroom and participate in activities in their communities. The theme's activities fall under three concepts: Working Together; I Make A Difference; and Communicating with Others.

#### **2. DoubleClick Democracy: Unlimited Use of Computer Voting Service**

DoubleClick Democracy is an online voting service hosted by Kids Voting USA on the DoubleClick server, so there are no downloads. The online voting ballots replicate the races and issues that are on the adult ballot for each electoral district and voting can take place on computers or ballots can be printed out. Results are reported in real-time—meaning you can announce a winner after the final vote is cast. Additionally, the system can be used for any school election or classroom contest, such as

poster contests, selecting the classroom's favorite book, student government races and homecoming elections. DoubleClick Democracy fosters the habit of voting.

### **3. Affiliates—The League of Women Voters**

Currently, the League of Women Voters of Clallam County is the required tax-exempt organization assuming responsibility for the “nuts and bolts” operation of Kids Voting USA and pays for the cost of the program. Leagues use their local experience and knowledge to establish working relationships with area school districts, local government officials, and community leaders for full implementation of the Kids Voting USA program.

#### **Professional Development Workshops**

**Summer—One day, 6-hour orientation workshop:** Teachers familiarize themselves with the lessons/activities, create a yearly/semester plan, explore the on-line voting program, develop skills for leading non-partisan discussions in the classroom, discuss family involvement and identify state and League resources. (6 clock hours available)

**Fall—Three, 2-hour implementation workshops:** Teachers prepare for the upcoming election by reviewing their county's sample ballot, choosing candidate races and issues to study with their students, selecting Kids Voting USA lessons/activities to use, planning for family involvement, creating the ballot, voting on election day and debriefing after the election. (2 clock hours for each session for a total of 6 hours.)

#### **Local League Involvement**

- **Providing support and building relationships with pilot teachers**
- **Facilitating the professional development workshops (location with WiFi & computers)**
- **Adding teacher information to the online voting software (Double Click Democracy)**
- **Creating the county ballot template**
- **Providing resources and coordinating guest speakers**

Leagues interested in starting Kids Voting USA in their area need a contact person to coordinate the program. Preferably that person (or someone on their committee) has a good working relationship with their local school(s) and good computer skills (adding teacher/school information into DoubleClick Democracy, creating the county ballot template, trouble shooting ballot issues, etc.). Experience facilitating group activities is also beneficial. The League of Women Voters of Clallam County will mentor/guide new Leagues through their first year of implementation.

#### **Kids Voting USA in Washington State—Timeline**

**2018—Pilot Program in Clallam County**

**2019—Expand in Clallam County and find 1-2 other Leagues to implement a pilot program**

**2020—Expand to more sites**

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