

# The Curriculum: Civics for All and Mock Elections

**Overview:** The curriculum for the average 5 day, Monday through Friday unit in October on mock elections is simple, efficient, and scalable. While academic freedom and instructional creativity geared to given students should provide for different teachers to cover the material in different ways, the basic, standard protocol for a mock election voter education unit is below under: “The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum”

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## Overview: By grade

- 1) Grade K-5 Elementary Schools have a distinct curriculum based on truly local issues in the classroom, the schoolhouse, and the neighborhood/community
- 2) Grade 6-12 Middle and High Schools have a distinct curriculum based on a mix of “real” voting ballot measures and races and occasional/optional “proposed” school/community chosen topics/measures

## Overview: By Voting Menus of Annual Major Races

- 1) Elementary Schools Menu: See below
- 2) Secondary Schools Menu:
  - A) Even Years
    - a. Presidential race each 4 years; 2020, 2024, 2028, etc.
    - b. State legislative races – in even years
    - c. Congressional races – in even years
  - B) Odd years
    - a. Seattle Mayor, each 4 years; 2021, 2025, 2029, etc.
    - b. City Council Races every 2 years, alternating 4 year terms, 2019, 2021, 2023, etc.
    - c. School Board Races, every 2 years, alternating 4 year terms, 2019, 2021, 2023, etc
  - C) Every Year
    - a. Various Initiative and Referendum Measures each year

## Materials Sources:

### Ballots: [King County Elections](#)

[King County Voter's Guides](#) – Pamphlets or downloads

[Ballotpedia of Washington](#) – a superlative, non-partisan information source for all elections

[The Municipal League Foundation of Seattle](#)

[The Seattle Times](#)

[KUOW](#)

## “The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum”

### 1) Day One

#### a. Framing the larger political landscape/context

- i. Teacher introduces the race/candidates/measures to be voted upon
- ii. Teacher reviews where and how the race/candidates/measure fits within the standard matrix of school, [local](#), state, and federal [government structures](#)
- iii. Teacher identifies the core issues that the race/candidates/measure will be focused upon, i.e. homelessness in this fall’s City Council races and budget allocation in this fall’s School Board races

### 2) Day Two

#### a. Framing the race/candidates/measures

- i. Students read, annotate, discuss, and summarize non-partisan information about the race/candidates/measures to be voted upon
  - Sources: King County Voter’s Pamphlets, photocopies from Ballotpedia of WA, Seattle Municipal League

#### b. Framing the Debate: Identifying the Issues and Points of Contention between opposing sides

- ii. Students read, annotate, and summarize **partisan information for and against** the race/candidates/measures to be voted upon
  - Sources: King County Voter’s Pamphlets, Ballotpedia of WA, Municipal League

#### c. Discussion and Discourse: Developing a shared understanding, and honest disagreements, about the race/candidates/measures to be voted upon

#### d. Teacher review of the basics to make sure all students are familiar with what they will be voting on and the issues involved

### 3) Day Three

#### a. Media Literacy

- i. Students are instructed about and review voting information, including TV and print advertisements, within their appropriate grade bands from the Civics for All [Media Literacy 101](#) tenets, including identifying [political bias](#) via the class political spectrum poster in op-eds, columns, articles, advertisements, etc.
  1. Online sources: [Checkology](#) from the News Literacy Project, [Teaching Tolerance: Digital and Civic Literacy Skills](#), [Web Literacy For Student Fact Checkers](#), Stanford’s [Civic Online Reasoning Assessments](#), etc.
  2. Print sources: KUOW, Seattle Times, the Stranger, TV advertisements, etc.

### 4) Day Four

#### a. Project Based Learning with emphasis on respectful discourse over complex issues

- i. Begin interactive lessons/discourse/debates begin looking at the pros and cons
  - Interactive lessons/discourse/debates – Activities options:
    - i. Make promo videos for your assigned “side”
    - ii. Make respectful, negative attack videos against the other “side”
    - iii. Stage a formal debate between sides
    - iv. Write op-eds for or against a “side”
    - v. Do SACs ([Structured Academic Controversy](#)) in small groups
    - vi. Make editorial cartoons for and against a “side”
    - vii. Write letters to candidates, stakeholders
    - viii. Etc.

#### b. [Homework: Parent Interview Assignment](#) – a very popular exercise! Students review the issues/races with their parents and often change their opinions!

## 5) Day Five

- a. **Project Based Learning continues**
- b. **Evaluation and Reflection** – students write up a half page summary of their learning and fill in their practice ballot so they know exactly how they are going to vote on Election Day

**ELECTION DAY!!!** Students vote on paper ballots (and online if feasible) and deposit them in a ballot box at a school designated “polling place” and also vote online via Schoology!

**Time Allotment: 3-10 class periods**

### **Mock elections websites/curricular models / resources:**

- 1) <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/mock-election/#/landing> - WA State
- 2) <https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/mock-election> - Sandra Day O'Connor's organization
- 3) <http://www.youthleadership.net/learning-programs/mock-election/> - University of Virginia's superlative materials
- 4) <http://www.nationalstudentparentmockelection.org/> - Includes parent engagement option
- 5) <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/partners/kids-voting-usa/> - KidsVotingUSA K-12
- 6) <https://www.socialstudies.com/c/product.web?nocache@4+s@GDInFNk44UzTw+record@TF144037+Title@ELECTIO NS+ISBN@9781575966205> Presidential Elections from Storypath, from Seattle University

### **Preparation time to vote:**

Different teachers will take different amounts of time to vote: some might take just a few days to review the issues/races in September, October, or early November while others might take a week or more to prepare students to vote.

### **Age - appropriate voting:**

Grades K-5 - mock elections are less tied to real elections and are more hands. For example, K-2 students might vote on their favorite animals and learn about their status in the wild, while grades 3 and 4 may look at more conceptual topics like [how democracy affects their every day lives and households](#), as per the [KidsVotingUSA](#) curricula.

Grades 6 - 12 - students can begin to tackle real time election issues, often by being given assignments to engage their parents in the learning.

### **Choosing Topics/Races to Vote on:**

Schools (in particular social studies departments) can choose the number or type of topics they want their students to learn about and vote on. Materials for a broad range of "real-time" topics as well as proposed legislation would be made available to all via the state/city voter's guides as well as materials loaded onto the district website so teachers can share / use materials without reinventing the wheel from school to school, etc. In major elections such as presidential races and mayoral races it would be understood that most if not all schools would vote on those topics, again, using shared materials for efficacy and expediency. K- 4 voting would be with age appropriate materials – see below.

### **2 types of Voting**

1) Voting on "real" state initiatives, legislative races, congressional races, mayoral races, school board races, and, of course, presidential races

2) Voting on proposed legislation/initiatives such as: examples - gun control measures proposed after the Parkland Massacre, the "head tax," state income tax, proposed luxury car tax initiative, etc.

**Paper and/or Online Balloting: A few fundamental questions/options to consider in doing mock elections themselves:**

- 1) What are the various advantages and disadvantages of using different types of voting:
- a) voting on paper ballots in classrooms or in mock voting booths on the day of the elections
  - b) voting online with the state website by scheduling library time for computer access prior to election day
  - c) voting on Schoology (the district student/teacher/family communication medium), or other method

**Brief Notes on the actual voting process and options:**

a) Paper ballots (either "real" from King County Elections or downloadable from the district civics webpage) offer many advantages, including they are tactile and "real" to students, collecting them and counting them offers great opportunities for student engagement and community participation as "elections officials," the results for your school are known quickly, etc. builds the CIVIC EXPERIENCE: kids students get the tactile experience of using the ballot, of putting their signature on the envelope/ballot; kids can vote en masse across the school in home – room, a designated period, or in their SS classes; also – I was told a few years ago by SOS that we could send them our ballot tallies to them for inclusion in their data bases

b) Online voting has its merits but requires voting more than a week before the election, is not tactile and as "real" as paper balloting, and, very importantly, the Secretary of State's system does not offer school by school returns information which detracts from the school community experience and hampers the accumulation of data - i.e. voter participation rates - from school to school - this data is essential to building competitions between schools for "voter participation rates"

c) Voting on Schoology in classrooms has many potential variables and could be useful in grades 6-12 perhaps

**In voting a balance needs to be found between school/teacher/student preference and the need to have some measure of uniformity for expediency's sake, including voter participation competitions between schools!**