

# The Curriculum: Annual K-12 Mock Elections in SPS 2026 – 2029

Tuesday November 3, 2026 is first election day!

## 2 KEY NOTES FOR THE 2026 ELECTION:

### 1) TEACHING THE IDEA OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CRUCIAL MIDTERM ELECTION WILL BE CRUCIAL BROADLY.

ALSO, ALTHOUGH NEITHER OF OUR FEDERAL SENATORS ARE UP FOR RELECTION THIS FALL AND NEITH\_EVEN THOUGH NONE OF OUR TWO CONGRESS PEOPLE’S RACES THIS YEAR (P. JAYAPAL AND A. SMITH) WILL BE CLOSELY CONTESTED, THE IMPORTANCE OF SCRUTINIZING THEIR POSITIONS TEACHES KIDS THE CRITICAL LESSON THAT VOTING IS IMPORTANT IF YOU CANDIDATE OF CHOICE IS A GUARANTEED WINNER OR LOSER – EVERY VOTE IS COUNTED AND MATTERS AT THE END OF THE DAY!

### 2) DEBATING AND VOTING ON THE INITIATIVE ON THE “MILLIONAIRE’S TAX” WILL BE A PROCESS, WITH SO MANY PROS AND CONS.

## Annual Election Races in WA for Federal, state, and local

### Even Years

- a. Presidential race each 4 years; 2028, 2032, etc.
- b. Congressional races – a) Representatives, every 2 years, in evens years  
b) Senators, every 6 years in even years, 2028 (Murray) and 2030 (Cantwell)
- c. State Governor race each 4 years: 2024, 2028, 2032, etc.
- d. State legislative races – every 2 years in even years for reps, every 4 years of state senators; 2026, 2030, etc.
- e. School Board Races, every 2 years, alternating 4 year terms, 2026, 2028, etc.
- f. State Supreme Court Justices, alternating 6 year terms

### Odd years

- a. Seattle Mayor, each 4 years; 2026 (leap year), 2030, 2034, etc.
- b. City Council Races every 2 years, alternating 4 year terms, 2027, 2029, etc.

### Any Year (Even or Odd)

- Various Initiative and Referendum Measures

## Overview of 5 year SPS Mock Election Plan:

2026 – to 2029 pilot would involve active mock elections in classrooms across the district and 2030 would be an efficacy evaluation year

For the 2026 to 2030 SPS Pilot, some possible suggestions/guidelines are offered below for the curriculum for the average 5 – 9 day mock elections in late October/ early November that efficient, scalable, and spend a bit of time on common basics.

While it is paramount to provide academic freedom and instructional creativity for what and how teachers cover the material in different ways that is geared towards their students' interests and skill sets (big diff. between 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders!), there still needs to be district wide social study teacher agreement on what races/initiatives will be voted on in each school, ideally with a few district wide common votes to provide meaning when the final voting numbers are tallied and published. If possible, students should have a voice in selecting the races/items to be voted upon.

## **Remember: Absolute non-partisan presentation of choices is crucial**

### **Contents Below:**

- 1) Overview: By grade
- 2) Overview: By Voting Menus of Annual Major Races
- 3) Materials / Sources
- 4) The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum
- 5) Time Allotment: 3-10 class periods
- 6) Preparation time to vote:
- 7) Age - appropriate voting:
- 8) Choosing Topics/Races to Vote on
- 9) 2 types of Voting
- 10) Paper and/or Online Balloting
- 11) Voter turnout competitions between schools by percentage
- 12) Mock elections websites/curricular models

### **1) Overview: By grade**

- 1) Grade K-5 Elementary Schools have a distinct curriculum based on:
  - a. K-2: [iCivics foundations](#) along with local issues in the classroom, the schoolhouse, and the neighborhood/community;
  - b. 3rd grade: Since Time Immemorial curriculum, with proposed emphasis on voting/elections
  - c. 4th and 5th grade: a mix of “real” voting ballot measures and races and occasional/optional “proposed” school/community chosen topics/measures (see below – “Elementary Schools (K-5) Menu”)
- 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

### **2) Overview: By Voting Menus of Annual Major Races**

## “The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum”

- for secondary schools’ social studies classes (gr.6-12)

### 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. the congressional voters races and the “millionaire’s camp” initiative

iv. Preview student voter pamphlet, relevant sections

### 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, which includes race/measure background

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.

3b. Community Engagement

i. Homework: Parent Interview Assignment – a very popular exercise! Students review the issues/races with their parents and often change their opinions!

ii. Voter registration competitions!

#### 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

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**“The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum”**

**- for elementary schools’ social studies periods (grades K-5)**

Note: In presidential (2020, 2024, 2028, et.) and mayoral election (2021, 2025, 2029, etc.)

years the elementary curriculum should roughly mirror the above, secondary “The Five Day Mock Election Curriculum” – but you should choose your own issues at appropriate levels of challenge that are interesting to your level of students

<https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/07/21/624267576/what-your-state-is-doing-to-beef-up-civics-education>

"It's important to start teaching about civics in kindergarten to have basic ideas of justice and service," Quigley says. Teaching students to explore questions like: "Why do we have rules and laws? Why do we have positions of authority?"

**Curriculum guide for non-presidential/non-mayoral election years**

### 1) Day One

- a. Discuss/choose possible voting issues/topics
- b. Discuss core democratic values in voting: equity, access, tolerance, majority rule – minority rights, accepting defeat gracefully, etc.
- c. Design ballots
- d. 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
- iv. Preview student voter pamphlet, relevant sections

### 2) Day Two

- a. Framing the race/candidates/measures or whatever topics your classes choose
  - 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, which includes race/measure background, funding etc. from Ballotpedia of WA, Seattle Municipal League
  - 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
- 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
- 4d. 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 - options
  - 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.

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### **Materials Sources and Curriculum Guides:**

#### **For secondary grade 6-12 students**

Ballots:

King County Elections

Voting Information/Sources:

Student Voter Pamphlets for all grade 6-12 students

5King County Student Voter’s Guides – All in one pamphlets with teacher guides, parent interview assignments, etc.

Ballotpedia of Washington – A superlative, non-partisan information source for student voter pamphlets for all elections

Other Voting Information/Sources

Washington Secretary of State (SOS) Mock Elections Teacher Resources

The Municipal League Foundation of Seattle

The Seattle Times

KUOW

## **Information below is ancillary / for implementation considerations**

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 up more to prepare students to vote.

**Age - appropriate voting:**

Grades K-5 - mock elections are less tied to real elections and are more hands on. 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.

## **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:**

#### **Benefits of Real Voter's Pamphlets and Real voting on a ballot**

Paper ballots (either "real" from King County Elections or downloadable from KCE or 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

**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!

#### **Supplemental 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