



Texas Association of Community Schools

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ELECTION DAY IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

TACS and our twelve partners are working together as **Texas Educators Vote** to build a culture of voting among Texas's 700,00+ individuals who earn a paycheck in Texas public schools. Many of you have partnered with **Texas Educators Vote** to encourage your staff to vote; in fact, several of you have implemented plans to ensure that voting becomes a priority in your school district.

Voting is the very foundational stone upon which our country was built. It has been said that as Benjamin Franklin was leaving Independence Hall after casting his vote for the new Constitution in 1787 a woman approached him to ask what type of government was established. Franklin is reported to have replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it." Over the years, citizens practicing their civic privilege of voting have allowed us to keep and enjoy the rights bestowed on us by this Republic that we call the United States of America. By casting a ballot in elections we do more than elect people to represent us or to determine if our community will get a new school or fire station; we also ensure that the freedoms given to all citizens in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights remain guaranteed.

During our nation's history, some Americans have had to fight for their right to vote. It was not until 1870 with the passage of the 15th Amendment which prohibits the United States from denying a citizen the right to vote based on his, "... race, color, or previous condition of servitude" that African-American citizens voted. Of course, many of us can remember that it took the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act before people of color and those in poverty really gained the "power of the ballot". It has been less than one hundred years since women citizens of our country were allowed to vote. Blood, sweat, and tears were shed as each of these groups worked to have a voice in their government through voting. Voting is important business!

Election Day, 2016, is only one week away. Creating a "culture of voting" in schools is important for many reasons: (1.) Educators who vote help preserve the rights earned by our fore fathers over the years. (2.) As educators vote, they serve as role models for the community and for their students of good civic responsibility. (3.) Who votes for educators' interests if not educators? (4.) Voting allows all who vote (not just educators) to retain the right to complain with integrity. (5.) Educators who vote give a "voice" to their students who are too young to vote. (6.) Voters get a free "I Voted!" sticker.

As schools work to build a "culture of voting", it is important that they ensure that every eligible voter within their walls are registered to vote. Hopefully you and your principals have implemented a plan to register every staff member and student who is eligible to vote, you provide voters with information to help them make good choices, and you are initiating an incentive plan for all of the staff who vote. While it's too late to register, you may go to www.texaseducatorsvote.com for some great ideas to educate and incentivize the staff.

In creating a "culture of voting", it is impossible to start too young. I read of a lesson a primary teacher used to teach voting to her young students. She read to them **The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf**.

In this book the wolf is trying to set the record straight on how he became "big" and "bad". By his account, he was baking a birthday cake for his dear grandmother when he ran out of sugar. When he went next door to his neighbor the pig's house to borrow some sugar, the pig told him, "No!" About that time, according to the wolf, he sneezed and blew away the straw house of the pig and his neighbor pig. Since both were already dead, the wolf says he just ate them. When he went to the next house which was made of brick, the piggy inside immediately called the police and had the wolf arrested. So the wolf explains that he is stuck in jail and his grandmother went without a birthday cake!

After reading the story, the teacher explains to the children the concept of voting, and she tells them that they are going to vote for the version of the story they believe to be true – the pigs' or the wolf's. The students then design their own ballot, cast their vote, put the ballot in the ballot box, and get their "I Voted!" sticker. After the teacher counts the votes, they discuss why each believed the version that they did. Please let me know of lessons that your teachers are using to teach voting and its role in our society.

For secondary students, Williamson County is encouraging high school students to become involved in voting. Williamson County officials invited high school students sixteen years of age and older to apply to work at polling location on Election Day. Students who are eighteen or older must also be registered to vote. While the students must provide their own transportation to and from their assigned location, they receive an excused absence from school for the day, they may receive class credit for work missed, and they are paid \$10 per hour. Students selected must attend an in-person training session. What a great lesson in civic responsibility! It might not be too late for your county to implement this strategy.

To educate your community about the election, why not announce at this week's football game that Election Day is November 8th, and the polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.?

Good luck to each of you as you create a culture of voting in your schools!!

MIDDLE GRADES LONGITUDINAL STUDY 2017-18

While attending AMLE2016, I met a young lady who works with RTI International. RTI International is a third party vendor managing the Middle Grades Longitudinal Study 2017-18 (MGLS:2017) for the Department of Education (DOE). MGLS:2017 is a new, unprecedented study that will follow a cohort of sixth graders through their middle school years. The study's goal is to assess students' mathematics and reading skills, executive function, and socioemotional well-being. Additionally, information will be collected on family and school factors that encourage success during these important years of education.

This is not a volunteer program. The DOE will select campuses to participate, but once selected, the schools may agree to participate or not. RTI asked me to let you know about this program so that you might be aware of it and receptive to an invitation.

For more information about MGLS:2017 you can go to <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/mgls/>.

DISTRICT OF INNOVATION CONFERENCE

During the last legislative session, the state returned a measure of local control back to ISDs via the District of Innovation (DOI) concept. As designed, the legislation creating DOIs allows school districts the flexibility that charter schools enjoy.

If you are interested in learning more about the District of Innovation concept, if you are in the process of planning to be a DOI, or if your district has already been designated as a DOI, you might want to get to Mansfield ISD on November 7, 2016. They are hosting a District of Innovation Institute from 10:00 until 4:00 that day.

The Institute will provide information about the process; best practices for working with your community, teachers associations, and Board; legal considerations; and, most importantly, the opportunities offered by specific exemptions to state law.

Only \$50 per person which includes an on-site lunch, the conference will be held at the Mansfield ISD Center for Performing Arts. For more information or to register, visit www.mansfieldisd.org/DOI.

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