



Texas Association of Community Schools

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Texas Educators Vote Update

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Thank you and keep up the good work!

A few nights ago, as the unexpected snow fell in Austin, I sat by the fireplace with a cup of tea (and some chocolate) reading the social studies TEKS for kindergarten through 12th grade. I found that the issues of civics, citizenship, and voting appear every single year for students in Texas public schools. I am struck by the extreme hypocrisy of groups that are attempting to intimidate educators from modeling this key tenet of civic engagement for students, who (except for a small percentage) are not old enough to vote. Please know that you are doing the right thing encouraging and modeling civic engagement in your schools.

I'll share a few of my favorite TEKS:

Grade 1:

Citizenship: The student understands and can identify the characteristics of good citizenship, including truthfulness, justice, equality, respect for oneself and others, responsibility in daily life, and participation in government by educating oneself about the issues, respectfully holding public officials to their word, and voting.

Grade 4:

Citizenship: The student understands the importance of active individual participation in the democratic process. The student is expected to explain the duty of the individual in state and local elections such as being informed and voting.

Grade 7:

Citizenship: The student understands the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens in a democratic society. The student is expected to:

- a. Identify the rights of Texas citizens
- b. Explain and analyze civic responsibilities of Texas citizens and the importance of civic participation

Grade 12 (Government):

Citizenship: The student understands the difference between personal and civic responsibilities. The student is expected to:

- a. Understand the responsibilities, duties, and obligations of citizenship such as being well informed about civic affairs, serving in the military, voting, serving on a jury, observing the laws, paying taxes, and serving the public good
- b. Understand the voter registration process and the criteria for voting in elections

In addition to annual TEKS focusing on citizenship, high school principals are required to register eligible students to vote, and all employers must give employees time to vote. Earlier this fall, Texas Secretary of State Rolando Pablos challenged superintendents to “ensure all eligible students in their districts have the opportunity to register to vote and have their voices heard at the ballot box.” He writes “participation in our High School Voter Registration Initiative is crucial to the future of our state and the health of our democracy.” His website, Project V.O.T.E. (<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/projectvote/index.html>) is full of activities to do with your students to encourage them to become good and engaged citizens.

Educators, it is your right and responsibility to model civic engagement for students of all ages, and you should not be deterred from this important action.

Right now, you are sure to be furiously wrapping up the semester, overseeing final exams, finalizing grades, and preparing for a long-needed break. Thank you for all that you have done so far to help students and staff register to vote, understand the importance of civic engagement to our democracy, and realize which important issues are determined at various levels of government. You have begun a very important process and the all-important primary election will be soon upon us when you return to start the new year.

Key things you should be ready for first thing in January:

1. Make sure all staff and students in your district are registered to vote and that their registration and address are up to date. The last day to register to vote in the March 6, 2018 Primary Election is February 5th. <https://webservices.sos.state.tx.us/vrapp/index.asp>
2. Reach out to the local Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) unit for your area and ask them to help set up a candidate forum in January for the community, staff, and students who are eligible to vote. <http://www.trta.org/trta-near-you/find-a-local-unit/>
3. Reach out to the local League of Women Voters (LWV) in your area for help registering voters and to see if they have any candidate forums planned. Offer for them to hold these events in one of your schools. http://www.lwvtexas.org/local_leagues.html
4. Ask your local PTA to hold a candidate forum and encourage parents to be engaged and informed voters.
5. Please visit our website at <http://TexasEducatorsVote.com/> for a wealth of information about voting!

We at Texas Educators Vote want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your hard work creating a culture of voting in your school district. The importance of supporting and encouraging civic engagement among staff and students can't be overstated. This work will have lasting positive effects on students, staff, schools, communities, and the state of Texas. **Please be proud of the fine work you are doing and enjoy your time off knowing that you are doing the right thing!**

Many thanks,

Laura Yeager
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