



Texas Association of Community Schools

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Texas Educators Vote Update

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“Step 2 – Become an informed voter. Research candidates and plan your ballot!”

When people ask what “creating a culture of voting” means, we explain that there are three simple steps. Encourage educators to:

1. Register to vote
- 2. Research candidates-become an informed and engaged citizen**
3. Vote in all elections

Step 1: Register to vote.

The deadline to register to vote in this year’s primary elections was earlier this week, February 5th, 2018. One day, perhaps Texas will join the growing number of states allowing same-day registration, automatic registration, and online voter registration, but for now, we will work within our limited parameters. Keep registering voters who will be eligible to vote in the next election, but now is the time to focus on step 2 and prepare for step 3.

Step 2: Research candidates and learn about how Texas elections work.

The time is now for registered voters to begin informing themselves about candidates so they will be prepared to cast their ballot during early voting (February 20th-March 2nd). Voters should also decide which primary election (Republican or Democratic) they want to vote in. Texas has open primaries, so voters can vote based on party affiliation or strategically if they prefer.

There are many great ways for voters to learn about candidates.

1. Voters can attend candidate forums and ask questions about issues of great importance to them.
2. Voters can visit candidates’ websites and read about their backgrounds, passions, priorities, and see what each candidate deems most important on his or her “issues” pages. It is also interesting to see who “endorses” candidates to understand where their loyalty lies.
3. Voters can read local newspapers and look at who is endorsed and why.
4. A great resource for people interested in candidates’ views on education-related issues is [Teach the Vote](#). This website allows you to find which candidates you will be voting on and read their responses to questions about important education issues. While everyone will say they support education and educators, read between the lines and look for buzzwords to see what they really mean.
5. Voters can read other non-partisan groups’ voter guides. The [League of Women Voters](#) has one such [guide](#) that covers statewide elections and features candidate responses to questions on a variety of issues.
6. Voters can “build their ballot” and research candidates for local and state offices that will be on their specific ballot at vote411.org. This is also put out by the League of Women Voters and is a very helpful tool. There is a vote411 “widget” that you can put on your school district’s main website to help voters prepare for voting. Here is the [link](#).
7. The LWV has created 1-minute videos on what different elected officials do. It isn’t surprising that with so many people making decisions about public education in Texas, most people don’t know who does what. Understanding different roles of elected officials is important to becoming an educated voter. In this new YouTube series, the Texas League of Women Voters has short videos about who does what. [YouTube.com/user/LWVTexas/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/LWVTexas/videos)

Step 3: VOTE!

Early voting begins on February 20th, eleven days from now! Make plans for students and educators to get to the polls, wear their “I voted” stickers to earn non-financial incentives such as blue jeans days, and get them excited about voting and modeling civic engagement for students.

Just like educators like to wear comfortable clothing, everyone likes to feel empowered. Stress to your staff that they have the greatest power on Election Day – but only if they vote! It surprises people to learn that only a small percentage of Texans have been choosing our leaders as turnout is extremely low in the primary elections where most of our leaders are chosen. A friend of mine is a deputy voter registrar who told students she registered earlier this week that since so few people vote in the primary elections, they have the power of about 10 people with their one vote...if they cast it!

The Texas Tribune had a great article yesterday with answers to many questions about voting in the upcoming primary elections. Here is the link: [Everything you need to know about casting a ballot in the Texas primary elections](#)

Lastly, here is a shout out to some districts that have some great tools that you might think of sharing, or using to help make your own.

Lewisville ISD video about the importance of voting: [Facebook.com/LewisvilleISD/videos](https://www.facebook.com/LewisvilleISD/videos)

Alief ISD video about the importance of voting: [Superintendent Chambers on the Importance of Voting](#)

Richardson ISD website about voting: [RISD.org/GoVote](https://www.risd.org/GoVote)

Congratulations to Midlothian ISD! They tweeted that they achieved 100% voter registration among teachers and staff at several campuses! Let us know what successes you are having in your efforts to create a culture of voting.

Please follow Texas Educators Vote on Facebook [@TexasEducatorsVote](#) and Twitter [@TxEdVote](#) for helpful and non-partisan posts and tweets about voting. You can also find lots of good voter info on our website at [TexasEducatorsVote.com](https://www.TexasEducatorsVote.com).

Please let us know how else we can help you create a culture of voting in your school district. Email us with questions or good news at info@texaseducatorsvote.com.

You are all working so hard to educate each and every child that walks through your doors. Thank you for your tireless work for the 5.4 million kids and the future of our state. Please continue fostering a culture of voting in spite of the efforts by a small group of influential people to scare you and your staff out of exercising your right and responsibility to be engaged citizens. Their efforts to divide educators are providing fuel to the fire and inspiring civic engagement at a new level. If you haven't seen it, the letters from Empower Texans looking for whistleblowers took a turn and educators decided to turn a negative into a positive - as teachers do! The hashtag [#blowingthewhistle](#) has been trending as teachers, parents, and others supportive of public educators have been using it to share positive stories of things happening in Texas public schools. Visit that site and your faith in humanity will be restored. I know mine was as I stayed up in the wee hours with tears in my eyes reading the wonderful things Texas educators are doing for kids.

Onward with pride!

Sincerely,

Laura Yeager

Director, Texas Educators Vote

