

CITIZENSHIP: VOTING WITH YOUR FEET

This Citizenship activity provides students an opportunity to learn about Arkansas Ballot Issues and discuss their decisions in a respectful manner. Students will watch short You Tube videos on ballot issues prepared by the University Of Arkansas System Division Of Agriculture's Public Policy Center before voting and discussing the measures. This exercise provides students with a forum to discover direct democracy and use public speaking skills.

SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK STANDARDS

Social Studies provides an introduction to civics/government, economics, geography, and history. The course strands, content standards, and the student learning expectations (SLEs) are meant to be taught in an integrated manner, not in isolation. Basic skills and foundational knowledge are developed through practical classroom experiences that access and develop personal connections to the content. Students learn through social studies lenses that begin by focusing on the narrower and more manageable viewpoint of self and personal experience, expanding to community, state, nation, and ultimately to a broader word view. Find out more about the Arkansas Social Studies Curriculum Framework here: <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/curriculum-and-instruction/curriculum-framework-documents/social-studies-new-courses-valid-july-1-2015>

STANDARDS FOR THIS ACTIVITY LESSON

Strand	Content Standard Code	Content Standard Description
Citizenship	C.2.5/6.3	Analyze rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizens and non-citizens in the United States and various societies to 1500.
Citizenship	C.2.5/6.4	Examine actions/civic virtues that guide government, society, and communities over time. Civic virtues at the local, state, and national level.
Processes, rules, and laws	C.3.5/6.1	Compare the process for creating rules and laws at the local, state, and federal levels

*To see the full standard visit:

http://www.arkansased.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Curriculum%20and%20Instruction/Frameworks/Social_Studies/Grades_K-4_Social_Studies.pdf

BIG IDEAS

WHY ARE BALLOT ISSUES IMPORTANT?

- Every election cycle, 1.6 million Arkansans head to the polls to vote. But not everyone votes on statewide ballot issues. Many voters discover the proposed laws or constitutional amendments as they receive their ballot on Election Day. Others may have heard about an issue on TV or on social media, but aren't familiar with all the details or potential consequences of the law passing or failing. The state constitution guides how the state operates. The Arkansas Constitution includes laws that have established our free school system, freedom of speech, who can vote, how city and county governments operate, and much more. Ballot issues can change the current constitution or add new laws, and Arkansans have a say in this process on Election Day.

OBJECTIVES

- Participants will:
 - Learn what a ballot issue is
 - Practice and develop communication, problem solving, and receiving/analyzing skills
 - Understand the need to search for neutral information about a proposed ballot issue
- Main Teaching Points:
 - Research helps voters make an informed decision on ballot issues
 - Communication skills are necessary to effectively express yourself and impact others
 - Show that students can respect each other in a discussion where they disagree

SUPPLIES & PREPARATION

SUPPLIES

- Public Policy Center YouTube videos: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ARextension>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzwlawVM4o4F49FZuxhwqC60C45SD5Q5O>
- Computer/iPad/Device to play the videos
- Internet access or previously downloading the videos
- Arkansas ballot issue voter guide (a copy can be downloaded at www.uaex.edu/ballot)
- Pens and paper for students to use if they want to take notes while watching the videos

PREPARATION

- The Public Policy Center posts videos to YouTube explaining ballot issues a few months before the election. If a current videos are not available, consider using videos from past elections.
 - Ensure you have a working internet connection and can play the YouTube videos ahead of time to reduce technical difficulties and lost activity time. Have videos cued up (or downloaded) and ready to play before starting activity

ENGAGE THE STUDENTS

1. Introduce the Ballot Issues

- Start by asking the students to raise their hand if they know what a constitutional amendment is – ask one or 2 of them to explain.
- Explain how a constitutional amendment is a change to the Arkansas constitution, or fundamental rules that the state operates under, initiated by state legislators or voters.
- Discuss how legislators have the authority to refer three constitutional amendments each election cycle to voters to approve or disapprove.
- Discuss how voters have the right to propose constitutional amendments or new state laws to voters on the statewide ballot. These issues only appear on the ballot if supporters are successful in gathering a certain number of signatures from registered voters.

2. The Role of the Public Policy Center

- Explain how the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service researches each ballot issue and publishes a fact sheet or report on the statewide issues to help voters make an informed decision on Election Day. Reinforce that these are neutral reviews that don't take a side and don't tell people how they should vote.
- Explain how campaigns can define the issue differently depending on their views, and how someone who has not done their own research or critical review of the issue can be misinformed about the potential consequences of a ballot issue passing or failing.

ACTIVITY: VOTING WITH YOUR FEET

1. Play a YouTube video describing a ballot issue.
2. Use the voter guide to cover key points about the issue just to make sure they all understand what the ballot issue is.
3. After the video ends, ask students to stand up and move to one side of the room if they are “for” the ballot issue and to another side of the room if they are “against” it.
4. Give multiple kids the opportunity to defend their decision; remind them to be respectful!
5. Wrap up an issue by asking if anyone has changed their stance on the issue after hearing everyone's opinions.
6. Move on to another video and repeat the steps above.

CONNECT & EXTEND

- After discussion all of the ballot issue videos, ask the students about the process of debating or discussing different sides of an issue:
 - What's the difference between discussing and fighting?
 - Is it a good or bad discussion when people yell? Why or why not?
 - Are discussions better when people have reasons and evidence to support their ideas?
 - How can people show they respect each other in discussions?

REFERENCES

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