

AMERICAN CIVIC HOLIDAY RESOURCES

ELECTION DAY

How do you choose who to vote for?

As teachers, we encourage students to research, fact check, and weigh options. While most students cannot yet vote in the 2022 elections, a classroom committed to civic education is a place where teachers prepare students to be informed and engaged citizens who can apply the skills learned in the classroom one day in the ballot box.

The 2022 midterm elections provide an opportunity to invite students to think about the factors that are important to them in choosing which candidate to vote for in an election. In a world with so much information, it can be helpful to give students a framework to think through the issues that are important to them, before even considering the candidates.

Here are some possible discussion questions around determining pressing issues that affect students on a local, national and global scale:

- What are two local issues in your city or town that you feel need to be addressed?
 - What are two vital issues that you feel are the most pressing in the United States right now?
 - What are the two most pressing issues or events in the world that you feel the United States federal government should address right now?
- 

Guiding Questions and Self-Reflection

To review student responses, it could be helpful to have students share their answers to each question in a classroom word cloud. Word clouds create a visual statement identifying which issues students and their peers feel most pressing. [Mentimeter](#) is a great free tool for teachers to create word clouds to use with their classes.

Looking together at the word cloud, you can then discuss why students feel these particular issues are pressing and what guiding principles inform their views.

Ask students to consider:

- Are students primarily guided by what directly affects them and their family?
- Are students primarily guided by economic concerns, safety concerns, or more abstract ideas?
- Are students guided by values that emerge from their faith?

Research Component

Once students have discussed the issues they are looking for candidates to address in local, state and national elections, you may wish to give them time to research actual candidates running for office. This is a good time to remind students about core media literacy principles and the importance of cross referencing their online research.

You can ask students how they can find out information about a candidate. If their information primarily comes from material given out by the candidates, discuss why it's important to check the facts listed in candidates' promotional material to make sure they are accurate. You can also recommend that an effective way to check for accuracy is to see whether a fact is mentioned in other websites and news articles.

Research Component (con't)

An additional layer of research and discussion could focus on the character and experiences of the candidates. A good way to start is by having a discussion about leadership characteristics and why they are important in serving in public office.

Ask students to consider the following:

- What are the two most important leadership characteristics that you feel are important in a candidate for running for office?
- What types of experiences do you think are important in selecting a candidate?

These too can be presented in a word cloud. You can also discuss how you can assess the leadership qualities of a candidate. Ask students to pay attention to what they can learn from how candidates portray themselves and, equally important, their opponents in their campaign materials and ads.

As you know, there will be multiple opinions about issues, character and candidates. Our approach is to create a space where ideas and opinions can be shared, heard and understood respectfully.

At Civic Spirit, we believe that teachers have a unique opportunity to help shape the future citizens of our country. A core Civic Spirit methodology is the study of American texts and traditions balanced with the social-emotional development of students and the practice of urgent civic skills, such as voting. Elections provide an opportunity to raise students' awareness of their role in shaping the future of American society.

