Board Cover Memorandum

To: Board of Education

From: Sam Davis, Board Vice President
      Aimee Eng, Board Member

Meeting Date: June 22, 2022

Subject: Resolution No. 2122-0089 - Supporting the Implementation of Measure QQ in High Schools

Ask of the Board: Adoption by the Board of Education of Resolution No. 2122-0089 - Supporting the Implementation of Measure QQ in High Schools

Background: Historically, youth (ages 18-24) have been the least likely to vote in California elections. However, we have begun to see youth voter turnout increase from 36.6% in 2016 to 47.4% in 2020. Young people want to vote. They care about their futures and understand that they have the ability to either let others make decisions that impact them or to vote and help re-imagine what a future may look like. Furthermore, youth vote research has found that high school civics education significantly impacts youth voter behavior. A study done by the Tufts Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement found that youth were 40% more likely to vote when they turned 18 after having been taught about voting. More specifically, researchers have noted that only half of US youth are taught how to register to vote, despite the clear benefits of a comprehensive civic education.

Measure QQ was passed with a 67% vote by Oakland voters in November 2020. The measure enables the City Council to expand the voting age to 16 and 17 year olds for Oakland school board elections. This is a priority for Oakland youth and local organizations that comprise the Oakland Youth Vote Coalition (ACC, CFJ, OKF, AYPAL, YT, and OYC). Students have been doing important work to support the expansion of our local democracy by pre-registering youth voters, developing a Student Justice Platform that emphasizes student priorities, conducting voter education, and partnering with OUSD to develop a Voter Engagement Resolution.

Discussion: The City of Oakland and the Oakland Unified School District have the opportunity to provide youth with meaningful civic engagement by creating opportunities to further enfranchise the primary recipients of decisions that are taken at the Board level. For the November 2022 election, Oakland will have over 5,000 16- and 17-year olds. Regardless
of whether the City Council makes them eligible to vote, all students will benefit from a civically engaged school wide culture that promotes student voice and student engagement.

The proposed Resolution was introduced as a new legislative matter on June 8, 2022. It has since been revised.

The revised Resolution still directs the Superintendent or designee develop a comprehensive plan to increase voter education and registration among high school students that includes voter registration activities at every high school, supporting students (particularly, high school students) becoming civically engaged and familiar with the voting process, and a civics education and civic engagement curriculum. The revised Resolution would also now delegate full Board authority to the Superintendent or Chief Governance Office to implement Measure QQ for the November 2022 election so long as the Board ultimately ratifies any action that the Board would normally take.

**Fiscal Impact**

The fiscal impact of the revised Resolution is likely to be negligible in light of the specific kinds of actions and activities suggested therein and that will likely results from the development of the plan.

**Attachment**

- Resolution No. 2122-0089 - Supporting the Implementation of Measure QQ in High Schools
- Motions/Resolutions Presented To The Los Angeles City Board Of Education For Consideration: Equal Voter Registration Access for All through Celebrating National Voter Registration Day (Res-003-18/19) (Waiver of Board Rule 72)
- 2020 General Election: Fact Sheet 2 (March 2021): California’s Youth Vote: November 2020 General Election
- Growing Voters: Engaging Youth Before they Reach Voting Age to Strengthen Democracy (August 14, 2019)
- Youth Who Learned about Voting in High School More Likely to Become Informed and Engaged Voters (August 31, 2020)
RESOLUTION OF THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resolution No. 2122-0089

Supporting the Implementation of Measure QQ in High Schools

WHEREAS, Oakland Unified School District’s core values include prioritizing students first and equity as well as integrating student voice in decision-making, especially students with the highest needs;

WHEREAS, youth participation in civic engagement and the electoral process is an empowering practice of youth voice;

WHEREAS, voters in California ages 18-24 exercise their right to vote at significantly lower rates, 23.4% less than all older voters, and engaging voters in their youth increases the likelihood of voter turnout by 40%;

WHEREAS, Measure QQ, which enables the City Council to expand the voting age to 16 and 17 year olds in OUSD school board elections, passed with a 67% vote in the November 2020 election;

WHEREAS, Measure QQ was born out of the Oakland Youth Vote campaign, which was adopted by youth members of Oakland Kids First, All City Council Student Union, Californians for Justice, Youth Together, AYPAL, and the Oakland Youth Advisory Commission to create an onramp to broader democratic participation for young people;

WHEREAS, the November 2022 school board election will have a critical impact on the District, its students, its community, and on key educational issues;

WHEREAS, youth voting for OUSD school board members who represent their interests and have the power to influence school policies can help build the schools that young people in Oakland need and deserve;

WHEREAS, the California State Voter Registration deadline to participate in the November 8, 2022 General Election is October 24, 2022;

WHEREAS, the Education Code designates the last two full weeks of April and September as High School Voter Education Week in order to cultivate lifelong voters and active citizens and, for the 2022-23 school year, these weeks will fall on September 19-30, 2022 and April 17-28, 2023;

WHEREAS, in order to vote in California citizens must be registered to vote and National Voter Registration Day will be celebrated across the nation on September 20, 2022; and
WHEREAS, to be empowered and informed voters, young people should be engaged in the electoral process and civic education in their high school years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Education (“Board”) formally acknowledges the immense impact Measure QQ would have on the District’s diverse student body, community, and staff, and the Board commits to establishing a Districtwide foundational culture to increase access to voter education and registration;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board directs the Superintendent or designee to create a comprehensive plan that includes structures to support the following District-wide goals: (i) informing all school personnel regarding OUSD High School Voter Education week in September and April; (ii) providing high school principals and parent centers with educational materials regarding voter registration to be made available; and (iii) encouraging schools to create student voter outreach events during the Fall and Spring;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, as part of High School Voter Education Week, the Board directs the Superintendent to identify the appropriate departments in OUSD to coordinate with Alameda County Registrar of Voters, the California Secretary of State, and each school site, to ensure that voter registration activities occur at every high school, and these activities could include the following:

- Prominently posting or sharing a link to the Secretary of State’s online voter registration form (registertovote.ca.gov) on school’s website or with the school community via electronic communication;
- Setting up at least one station to assist students with voter registration or pre-registration. The station should be equipped with educational materials (including materials in non-English languages), paper voter registration cards, and online voter registration access. Stations should be located in an area that garners high foot traffic from students and educators, and should be set up during non-class times such as before school, during breaks or lunches, and after school;
- Offering innovative, fun, and engaging opportunities for students to lead Voter Registration efforts, such as a Voter Registration Drive, classroom workshops/presentations, Mock Elections, friendly competitions to get peers registered, and tabling at school-wide events;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board directs the Superintendent or designee to identify the appropriate OUSD departments or individuals to support students (particularly, high school students) becoming civically engaged and familiar with the voting process, and these efforts could include the following:

- Identifying staff to be responsible for coordinating voter registration efforts,
- Raising awareness about the importance of registering to vote and support High School Voter Education Week,
- Developing additional communications strategies to share information about voter registration,
● Creating opportunities for students ineligible to vote to understand additional ways to become civically engaged, and
● Encouraging schools to offer opportunities for students to engage in service learning projects geared towards voter registration, voter contact, and poll worker programs between now and November 8, 2022;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board also directs the Superintendent or designee to develop a clear plan to implement civics education and civic engagement curriculum starting in the 2023-2024 school year (or as soon thereafter as if feasible) in high school programs and continue supporting youth democracy and civic engagement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board hereby delegates its full authority to the Superintendent or Chief Governance Office to implement Measure QQ for the November 2022 election (which includes, but is not limited to, the authority to enter into legal agreements that would normally need to first be approved by the Board) so long as the Board ultimately ratifies any action that the Board would normally take but for this delegation of authority.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Education of the Oakland Unified School District this ___ day of __________, 2022, by the following vote:

PREFERENTIAL AYE:

PREFERENTIAL NOE:

PREFERENTIAL ABSTENTION:

PREFERENTIAL RECUSE:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTAINED:

RECUSED:

ABSENT:
CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of a Resolution passed at the Meeting of the Board of Education of the Oakland Unified School District held on ____________, ____________, 2022.

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OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

___________________________________________
Gary Yee
President, Board of Education

___________________________________________
Kyla Johnson-Trammell
Superintendent and Secretary, Board of Education
MOTIONS/RESOLUTIONS PRESENTED TO
THE LOS ANGELES CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR CONSIDERATION

SUBJECT: Equal Voter Registration Access for All through Celebrating National Voter Registration Day (Res-003-18/19) (Waiver of Board Rule 72)

DATE NOTICED: 08-21-18 PRESENTED FOR ACTION: 08-21-18

PRESENTED BY: Mr. Melvoin, Ms. García, Ms. Gonez

MOVED/SECONDED BY: Ms. Gonez / Mr. Melvoin

MOTION: RESOLUTION: x

Whereas, The Los Angeles Unified School District’s mission includes empowering tomorrow's leaders;

Whereas, Empowerment begins with civic engagement, such as participation in the electoral process;

Whereas, Despite representing the future of our democracy, younger citizens are registered to vote and exercise their right to vote at significantly lower rates than older voters;

Whereas, Increased participation of younger voters will significantly impact the future of our democracy;

Whereas, The tragic mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School in Parkland, Florida prompted a powerful national youth organizing movement, through which young people are inspiring their peers to effect change through democratic engagement;

Whereas, The November 2018 election will have a critical impact on the District, its students, its community, and on key issues such as education, social welfare and health care, international relations, and gun control;

Whereas, The California State Voter Registration deadline to participate in the November 6, 2018 General Election is October 22, 2018;

Whereas, California Education Code designates the last two full weeks of April and September as California High School Voter Education Week in order to cultivate lifelong voters and active citizens. During the 2018-2019 school year, these weeks will fall on September 17-28, 2018 and April 15-26, 2019;

Whereas, In order to vote in California, citizens must be registered to vote and National Voter Registration Day will be celebrated across the nation on September 25, 2018;
SUBJECT: Equal Voter Registration Access for All through Celebrating National Voter Registration Day (Res-003-18/19) (Waiver of Board Rule 72)

Whereas, The District has a long history of supporting access to voter registration in schools, including but not limited to Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District resolutions in 1982, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 2001, 2002, 2012, and 2016. During the most recent school year, the Board unanimously adopted the “LAUSD High School Voter Education Weeks” (Res-073-17/18) resolution sponsored by Dr. McKenna and Ms. Gonen, and “A New Generation of Leaders for Los Angeles, California, and the Nation” (Res-038-17/18), a resolution sponsored by Ms. García, Ms. Gonen and Mr. Holtzman, Student Board Member;

Whereas, In response to these resolutions, the District has continued or undertaken efforts to increase access to voter education and registration, including:

- Informing all school personnel regarding LAUSD High School Voter Education week in September and April;
- Providing high school and adult school principals and parent centers with educational materials regarding voter registration to be made available throughout campuses;
- Encouraging schools to name student voter outreach coordinators;
- In coordination with Power California, encouraging voter outreach coordinators;
- Providing voter registration materials as part of high school graduation packets;
- Notifying schools about the MyVote California Student Mock Election;
- Helping to organize the annual Power California Campaign; and
- Sending a letter, co-signed by the Secretary of State, to all graduating students encouraging graduates to register to vote.

Whereas, On July 19, 2018, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, alongside the Mayor's Student Council to End Gun Violence, announced a partnership with California Secretary of State Alex Padilla, March for Our Lives, the Los Angeles Community College District, and the District to heed the call from student activists and become the first city in America to commit to community-wide youth voter registration, including on all public high school campuses before the November 2018 elections as part of National Voter Registration Day; now, therefore be it

Resolved, That the Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District declares September 25, 2018 as “LAUSD High School Voter Registration Day”;

Resolved further, That, as part of High School Voter Education Week and in recognition of LAUSD High School Voter Registration Day, the Superintendent directs appropriate departments to coordinate with City of Los Angeles, the California Secretary of State, Los Angeles County as appropriate, and each school site to ensure that voter registration activities will occur on every high school and adult school campus and at parent centers during High School Voter Education Week. Such activities and education at each school site shall include, but are not limited to:

- Naming at least one employee and one student voter registration coordinator, who may participate in an electronic training hosted collaboratively by the City of Los Angeles, the District, and the Secretary of State to become knowledgeable regarding voter registration drives;
SUBJECT: Equal Voter Registration Access for All through Celebrating National Voter Registration Day (Res-003-18/19) (Waiver of Board Rule 72)

- Prominently posting or sharing a link to the state’s online voter registration form (registertovote.ca.gov) on the school’s website or with the school community via electronic communication; and
- Setting up at least one station, staffed by the voter registration coordinators and/or other knowledgeable persons equipped with paper voter registration cards and educational materials, including materials in non-English languages as appropriate and, as appropriate, online voter registration portals to assist students with voter registration or pre-registration;

Resolved further, That the Superintendent encourages District leadership and staff to raise awareness about the importance of registering to vote and support LAUSD High School Voter Registration Day by:

- Prominently posting a link to the state’s online voter registration site on the District website;
- Developing additional communications strategies to share information about voter registration;
- Sharing, in collaboration with the Charter Schools Division, the City of Los Angeles, and the Secretary of State, information and resources for conducting voter registration drives with all public charter schools authorized by the District;

Resolved further, That the Board encourages public charter school partners, and other school districts around California and the nation to commit to holding voter registration events on their school campuses; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Board encourages schools to offer opportunities for students to engage in service learning projects geared towards voter registration, voter contact, and poll worker programs between now and November 6, 2018.

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ACTION: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE
California’s Youth Vote: November 2020 General Election

This Center for Inclusive Democracy fact sheet provides highlights of the participation of youth (age 18-24) in California’s 2020 general election.

- According to the California Secretary of State, California saw the highest eligible turnout rate (the percentage of adult citizens who voted) in 2020 for a general election since 1952.
- In the 2020 general election, the youth (age 18-24) eligible turnout was 47.4%, a rate substantially higher than in the previous general election. The 2016 general election saw a 36.6% youth eligible turnout rate.
- The difference in the eligible turnout rate between youth and the total population (67.4%) stayed about the same in 2020 compared to 2016 – approximately 20 percentage points.
- In 2020, the eligible turnout rate for all Californians age 25 and over was 70.8%. This population’s eligible turnout rate increased from 61.6% in 2016.

- In the 2020 general election, eligible voter turnout of Asian-American and Latino youth was significantly lower than the turnout of youth overall. The Asian-American youth eligible turnout rate was 34.7%, with the Latino youth rate higher at 39.3%.
• The youth share of California’s voters increased to 10.2% in 2020, up from 8.9% in 2016. The youth share of California’s voters in 2020 was the highest of any California statewide general election seen since 2002 (2002 was the earliest year for youth data available from data sources).

• Youth remain underrepresented among California’s voting electorate. At 10.2%, the youth share of California’s 2020 general election voters was significantly smaller than the youth share of the state’s eligible voter population (14.5%).

• The registration rate (percentage of citizens who are registered to vote) immediately prior to the 2020 general election reached 84.5%.\(^1\)

• The youth registration rate (percentage of citizens 18-24 years who are registered) reached 66.4% in the 2020 general election – the lowest registration rate of any other age group.

• The youth registration rate is significantly lower than the registration rate among those age 45-54 (83.0%), the second lowest registration rate among age groups.

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1. The official state registration rate reported by the California Secretary of State as of October 19, 2020 was 87.9%.

For more information about this research study, contact Mindy Romero, CID Director, at msromero@usc.edu.

Data sources: Statewide Database, Political Data, Inc., and California Department of Finance. For study methodology, see CID website.
Growing Voters: Engaging Youth Before they Reach Voting Age to Strengthen Democracy

August 14, 2019

Multiple stakeholders have a role to play in creating the conditions for increased and more equitable youth voting.

When more—and more diverse—young people are politically engaged earlier in life, they are more likely to remain engaged in the future and to be part of an electorate that is more representative of the country, which should be a key goal of our democracy. The 2018 midterm elections saw an extraordinary increase in youth participation, but the youngest eligible voters—those aged 18 and 19—still voted at significantly lower rates (latest-research/youth-turnout-among-teens-shows-need-growing-voters). That age disparity in youth turnout has long been intractable, but it is far from inevitable. At the national, state, and local levels, there are steps we can take to eliminate this gap and to move from a paradigm focused on merely mobilizing voters, to one centered on Growing Voters.

How We “Miss” the Youngest Eligible Voters

We don’t automatically become engaged, informed, and empowered to participate in our democracy when we turn 18. Instead, young people begin to understand and experience democracy, and what role they are expected to play in it, well before they reach voting age. Before youth reach 18, they can have (or miss out on) experiences and receive implicit or explicit messages that shape whether they believe their voice matters and that change is possible. They also may or may not get practical information about how, where, and when to vote. All of these factors are shaped by the specific community conditions that surround young people: in their town or city, school, neighborhood, etc. The availability and quality of opportunities to develop as a voter and active community member is frequently unequal across these settings.

Community Conditions Matter

With youth voting in particular, a vicious cycle has developed. Because, for decades, young people have voted at lower rates than those aged 30+, there are often negative media narratives that suggest youth are apathetic. Many young people get the message that they’re being dismissed. What’s worse, these narratives very rarely focus on the real systemic barriers young people can face. Every community has a variety of assets and constraints to creating a culture where engagement is encouraged and facilitated. Because of the way engagement is often set up or administered, those challenges can be especially acute for youth from low-income households and from communities of color. For example, school clubs, youth organizations, and other extracurricular activities can be important “incubators” of civic behaviors, but depending on their race and ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, young people may have very inequitable access to those opportunities.
Basic Voting Information Is Not Obvious or Ubiquitous

In addition, some young people don’t know basic information about elections and aren’t sure where to get accurate information, especially when it comes to local elections. As with other obstacles, this barrier to voting is exacerbated by broader inequities. In our recent study of low-income youth (http://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/engaging-broader-youth-electorate-10-recommendations-increasing-voter-engagement) , 39% said they did not know where to vote. And while some young people can rely on family, co-workers of peers who are experienced voters, many others lack that support system and are unaware of other resources (like county or state elections office websites) where they could find out what they need. Election administrators can do more to understand issues of youth access, especially for young people who aren’t on college campuses.

Campaigns Aren’t Talking to the Youngest Eligible Voters

We can use the 2018 election cycle as a case study of how youth can get left behind by traditional electoral engagement strategies, and why we need a paradigm shift to increase and diversify voting among 18- and 19-year-olds, and youth engagement more broadly.
In our pre-midterm election poll, conducted in September 2018, we found that the youngest voters intended to vote at about the same rate as their slightly older peers: 31% of youth aged 18-21 said it was “extremely likely” that they’d vote, and 34% of youth aged 18-24 said the same. This suggests that the interest in casting a ballot was relatively equal among all youth and, far from being a product of apathy, the age gap in turnout is due to the various factors that influence whether someone who wants to vote actually does so.

One of the major factors is contact by political parties and campaigns. Research has shown that contact correlates strongly with voting, but campaigns reach out to the youngest potential voters much less, and less often. In 2018, for example, less than a third of young people aged 18-20 who were not in college and/or had no college experience were contacted (/latest-research/political-outreach-youth-was-effective-2018-midterms), whereas 60% of 18 to 24-year-olds were contacted. There are several reasons: first, campaigns rely heavily on previous voter rolls when coordinating outreach, so newly eligible voters are frequently left out. In addition, many political campaigns focus their youth outreach efforts on college campuses, and 18- or 19-year olds who may still be in high school, new to college and still acclimating to campus life, or not college-bound, can miss out. These are systemic issues that call for broad-based solutions.

**A New Paradigm: Growing Voters**

While electoral reforms and campaign mobilization strategies that reach youth when they near or reach voting age are important, in order to achieve a more representative electorate and sustained increases in youth participation efforts to prepare young people for electoral and civic engagement must start much earlier. Young people’s ability and desire to participate are shaped by many factors throughout their childhood and adolescence, and many youth become political actors long before they turn 18. As young people showed last year, especially in the aftermath of the Parkland school shooting, youth are raising awareness about issues, leading movements, and persuading friends and peers—all while being affected by the decisions of their political leaders.

Many different people in a community can play a role in Growing Voters, and the strategies they pursue can shift given the resources and constraints in a given community. Here are some ways to advance the work of Growing Voters:

**CIRCLE Growing Voters**

In June 2022 we released a major CIRCLE Growing Voters report, which expands on this research and introduces a new framework for how to reach all youth, eliminate inequities in voter turnout, and prepare the next generations to participate in democracy.

Read the Report and Learn More (/circlegrowingvoters)

**K-12 Civics and Teaching about Elections**

One key element of the Growing Voters paradigm is equitable, comprehensive K-12 civic education that incorporates teaching about voting and elections. Schools are uniquely able to reach nearly all youth in systematic ways, and to identify and address any gaps by race, socioeconomic status, etc. In our extensive research on the relationship between civic education and voting in the 2012 election, we found that teaching
about voting increased the likelihood of students (self-reported) voting when they turn 18 by 40%. While more research on how districts and schools institutionalize this practice is needed, we know that there are ways to implement this beyond specific lesson plans. When schools and districts commit to teaching about elections and voting, it can reduce negative messages about politics and youth voice.

We know that educators can be hesitant to help students learn the ins-and-outs of the political process and of political participation out of fear of being accused of partisanship. However, it is possible and necessary for schools to reduce constraints on political engagement, create a climate that supports youth civic development, and incorporate non-partisan lessons that address the importance of voting and even the basics of how to fill out a ballot. Schools can also work with election officials and community-based organizations to facilitate voter registration for students who turn 18 and for younger students where pre-registration is available. CIRCLE coordinates a national alliance [http://www.teachingfordemocracy.org/](http://www.teachingfordemocracy.org/) committed to supporting districts and schools’ efforts to create a school climate that support political learning and teach all students about elections and voting.

When implemented and properly supported statewide, a mandatory k-12 civics course that incorporates effective instructional practices can build young people’s civic knowledge, skills, and efficacy. Research has also shown that a civics test that is a graduation requirement can positively influence subsequent political engagement. (Importantly, this research did not include analysis of requirements to pass the American citizenship test [latest-research/more-test-truly-committing-civic-education](https://latest-research/more-test-truly-committing-civic-education), which some states have proposed or used as a civics test.) Relatedly, we recently found that 27 states now have language in their state codes that encourages, supports, and/or in a few cases requires a school or a local elections office to facilitate voter registration (and occasionally some basic education about voting, separate from course requirements and curricular standards) in high schools.

Facilitative Voting and Registration Laws

The 2018 election illustrates not just what’s not working, but what can make an impact. Youth voting, including turnout in 2018, can vary greatly at the state level. Youth turnout varied widely from state to state, including among 18- and 19-year-olds. While the national average was 23%, in six states (Colorado, Oregon, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada and Washington) the turnout rate for these “youngest youth” was above 30%. Five of those states (CO, OR, MN, NV, WA) have at least one of what we have termed facilitative election laws that make it easier for young people to register to vote and actually cast a ballot, such as automatic voter registration or pre-registration for youth before they turn 18. Our research has found that several of these policies have effects on youth voting:

**Online voter registration** - A positive correlation between enacted state policy and turnout of youth aged 18-19, and a minor positive effect on the registration rate of that same age group

**Strict Photo ID laws** - A negative correlation with the voter turnout of youth aged 18-29, especially among youth of color

**Pre-registration** - A minor correlation with turnout for age 18-19 youth, but only if pre-registration is available for both 16- and 17-year-olds (as opposed to just for 17-year-olds)

Other state laws and codes that support, for example, having young people serve as poll workers and voter registration in high schools, can also strengthen youth electoral engagement. Full implementation of these policies across the country is an important goal and this can differ greatly at the state level and within a state.
Youth-Centered Election Administration

As with schools, there is election infrastructure in every county in the United States that has the opportunity to reach, inform, and prepare young people to participate in democracy. However, our research reveals that there are many youth who do not trust or feel welcome in election offices and don’t understand how to access information about registering and voting. Election administrators have a crucial role to play in recognizing and working to overcome the specific barriers a wide range of young people face. These officials must rethink and redesign election administration to take into account the specific developmental needs of young potential voters; in particular, officials should not take for granted that youth will know, know where to find, or be able to easily learn from family and friends, basic information about when, where, and how to vote. This can include materials and processes informed by youth experiences, partnerships with local youth organizations, and state-level programs and resources from a Secretary of State or Board of Elections that can contribute to helpful state-specific materials and a culture of voting.

One particularly promising initiative: Several states allow for 16- and 17-year-olds to work at the polls on Election Day. These initiatives have multiple benefits: first, election administrators often face a shortage of poll workers, especially bilingual poll workers. Second, young people get to see same-aged peers when they go to their polling place, which our research has shown can be an unwelcoming place for some youth. According to a 2019 Survey of Minnesota Student Election Judge Programs by the YMCA Center for Youth Voice and Minneapolis Elections, over half of the 107 Minnesota jurisdictions who responded engage high school students to serve as election judges.

CIRCLE is currently partnering with Opportunity Youth United to support three OYUnited community action teams to build partnerships with local election officials to close these systemic gaps.

Supporting Diverse Local Youth Leadership and Voices

Other commitments central to Growing Voters can be advanced outside of the classroom or the county clerk’s office. Communities can support peer-to-peer outreach, organizing, and activism by creating or supporting spaces and opportunities for youth to come together and act on issues they care about, and by offering guidance and resources while letting young people, themselves, take the lead. Many of the educational and administrative practices we’ve mentioned can advance this goal: whether having teens as poll workers or using pedagogical practices centered on the concerns and ideas of youth. But just as important are community-based opportunities that can be led by youth, and that often provide opportunities for young people, especially those who have been marginalized, to develop critical consciousness and feel empowered to act.

Additionally, as civic institutions, media outlets also have roles to play in the work of bringing more community members into our democracy. Members of the media should interrogate narratives that suggest youth are politically apathetic, and they should focus on including more—and more diverse—young voices. Incorporating these voices can expand and enrich the stories being told, show other youth what their peers can achieve, and resonate with an audience that is often skeptical about the value and trustworthiness of media, especially their local news.

Final Thoughts
The efforts and policies described above are only at their most effective in facilitating youth participation when they are implemented deliberately, with an eye toward quality and equity, and with mechanisms in place for evaluation and accountability. As such, most of these laws and initiatives require adequate funding for training, professional development, and/or staff time.

Young people are not just the future of our democracy; they’re a big part of its present. In every field, in every community, and in every sector of our society, all of us have a role to play in Growing Voters and ensuring that youth are fully prepared to contribute to the political life of the country. For 2020 and beyond, we can begin that work and start seeing its impact today.
Youth Who Learned about Voting in High School More Likely to Become Informed and Engaged Voters

August 31, 2020

CIRCLE surveys show that there’s a relationship between being encouraged to vote and taught how to do so by teachers and a host of indicators of civic engagement later in life.

The 2020 presidential election is fast approaching, and the next few months will be critical for voter registration, education, and mobilization. Campaigns and grassroots organizers are revamping their outreach strategies to make the most of this final stretch, and it’s also an important time for K-12 schools to acknowledge and embrace their role in preparing young people for electoral participation. As educators are forced to rethink their instructional approach in light of COVID-19 disruptions, new research from a recent CIRCLE youth survey underscores the power of high school teachers encouraging students to vote and teaching them how to register to vote. Our survey offers a deeper understanding of the extent to which young people, ages 18-29, benefited from these experiences in high school and describes the impact of voter education and encouragement on youth attitudes and civic behavior.[1]

Our top findings reveal that:

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) report having been encouraged to vote in high school, while half (50%) say they were taught how to register to vote

- Who received civic encouragement or instruction in high school varies by race: two out of every three White students (67%) remember having been encouraged to vote in high school compared with one in two Black students (54%)

- Youth who reported having been either encouraged to vote or taught how to register to vote in high school are more likely to vote and participate in other civic activities, more knowledgeable about voting processes, and more invested in and attentive to the 2020 election than other youth

- Students who had not received encouragement to vote from teachers in high school were more than twice as likely to agree with the statement “Voting is a waste of time” as those who had been encouraged: 26% vs. 12%

- Young people who learned about voting procedures in high school are more prepared for voting today: they were more likely than their peers to know if their states had online voter registration, and at least 10 percentage points more likely to respond that they had seen information on how to vote by mail, and to state that they would know where to go to find information on voting if their state’s election was shifted to all mail-in ballots
About the Survey: The first wave of the CIRCLE/Tisch College 2020 Youth Survey was fielded from May 20 to June 18, 2020. The survey covered adults between the ages of 18 and 29 who will be eligible to vote in the United States by the 2020 General Election. The sample was drawn from the Gallup Panel, a probability-based panel that is representative of the U.S. adult population, and from the Dynata Panel, a non-probability panel. A total of 2,232 eligible adults completed the survey, which includes oversamples of 18- to 21-year-olds (N=671), Asian American youth (N=306), Black youth (N=473), Latino youth (N=559) and young Republicans (N=373). Of the total completes, 1,019 were from the Gallup Panel and 1,238 were from the Dynata Panel. Unless stated otherwise, ‘youth’ refers to those ages 18- to 29-years old. The margin of error for the poll, taking into account the design effect from weighting, is +/- 4.1 percentage points. Margins of error for racial and ethnic subgroups range from +/-8.1 to 11.0 percentage points.

Access to Civic Instruction and Encouragement in High School Varies

Our survey indicates that half of young people in the U.S. have received instruction on how to register to vote (50%), and a majority have received encouragement to vote from teachers in high school (64%). While the survey offers limited insight into the quality or depth of these educational experiences, and does not imply causality, the data highlights a relationship between these experiences and outcomes that educators and allies across the country can build on to strengthen civics education in schools. Past CIRCLE research has found that young people who recall having received a better civics education are more likely to be civically engaged (https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-01/all_together_now_commission_report_2013.pdf). These new results further illustrate the relationship between civic instruction and civic behavior.

Ensuring impact, however, begins with ensuring access. Our findings reveal inequities in who receives voter education and encouragement in high school, with disparities according to students’ race/ethnicity and region.

Young People's Civic Experiences in High School Vary by Race/Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Youth</th>
<th>Asian Youth</th>
<th>Black Youth</th>
<th>Latino Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Were encouraged to vote by a teacher in high school

Source: CIRCLE polling data
While almost two in three students overall (64%) report having been encouraged to vote in high school, this was true for just over half of Black students (54%). Additionally, 50% of 18- to 29-year-olds remember explicitly having received instruction in how to register to vote, and a slightly lower percentage of Black youth say they remember such instruction—though this difference is small. This data echoes past CIRCLE findings that White students and students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were exposed to more promising practices in civics education than other students.

Lastly, by examining the responses of respondents of different ages (who would have been in school at different times) we tried to identify any trends in whether such voter instruction and/or encouragement has changed over time. While we found some evidence to suggest that colleges are doing better teaching and encouraging students to vote than they have in the past, we observed no clear aggregate changes over time nationally in whether voting is/is not taught or encouraged in high schools.

Voter Education and Encouragement in High School Associated With Stronger Civic Behavior and Attitudes

Our survey finds that there is a strong and consistent relationship between young people’s self-reported high school experiences with voter education and encouragement, and their interest/engagement in civic participation later in life.

Young People’s Attitudes toward Voting Influenced by Teachers’ Encouragement

The percentage of young people, 18-29, in each category who agreed with the following statements:

- Were not encouraged to vote in high school
- Were encouraged to vote in high school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting is a waste of time,</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know enough to vote.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While just over a quarter (26%) of survey respondents who did not remember being encouraged to vote in high school agreed with the phrase “Voting is a waste of time,” this number dropped by half (to 12%) among young people who had received encouragement to vote in high school. Similarly, one in four young people (25%) whose high school years lacked this form of civic encouragement agreed with the statement “I don’t know enough to vote,” this rate dropped ten percentage points (to 15%) among youth whose high school teachers had offered encouragement to vote.
Youth who remembered receiving voter instruction or encouragement in high school also reported higher rates of participation across a range of civic activities, some explicitly political and some not.

**Students Taught or Encouraged to Vote in High School More Civically Engaged**

The percentage of young people, 18-29, in each category who have engaged in the following activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Received Encouragement to Vote in High School</th>
<th>Was Taught about Voter Registration in High School</th>
<th>Neither</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talked to friends about political issues or elections</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteered on a political campaign</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donated money to a political campaign</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered others to vote</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tried to convince other young people to vote</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attended a march or demonstration about an issue that I care about</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocated for a local, state or national policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Served in a leadership role at a community organization

24%
20%

For example, youth who were encouraged or taught how to register to vote in high school were at least 10 percentage points more likely to have volunteered on or donated money to a political campaign. They were also at least 12 percentage points more likely to have served in a leadership role in a community organization, attended a march or demonstration, or advocated for policy change. According to self-reported voter turnout from our survey, in both the 2016 and 2018 elections young people who had received both encouragement and instruction on voting in high school voted at a rate 7 percentage points higher than youth who received neither.

Educators Can Play an Important Role in Expanding Equitable Voter Participation

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic adds a new layer of challenges and complexity to enabling and inspiring youth electoral participation this fall. But among all of the other educational priorities, helping youth navigate what they are seeing and hearing about civic life right now is crucial. Our survey suggests that youth who received instruction on registering to vote or encouragement to do so in high school are more invested in the 2020 election than youth who did not receive either, and that they will be better prepared to navigate changes to eligibility rules and election procedures in the months ahead.

Regardless of how long ago youth were in high school, those who received encouragement or instruction about voting from secondary school teachers are paying more attention to the 2020 election than their peers who did not have these experiences in school. That said, they’re not always more likely to believe that the election’s outcomes will significantly impact their communities.

Students who had these experiences in high school are not only more attentive to what’s going on in the election; they’re more informed as well. And our analysis revealed that students who had been both encouraged to vote and taught how to register to vote in high school were the best prepared to navigate modern election procedures.

Survey respondents who had either been encouraged to vote or taught how to register in high school were 10+ percentage points more likely to have seen information about how to vote by mail than students who had neither experience, and this likelihood grew among young people who were both encouraged and taught to register to vote in high school.
Youth Taught or Encouraged to Vote in High School Are Better Prepared for the 2020 Election

The percentage of young people, 18-29, in each category for whom the following is true:

- Received Encouragement to Vote in High School
- Taught about Voter Registration in High School
- Both
- Neither

Are paying “Some” or “A Lot” of attention to the 2020 elections

- 82%
- 72%
- 79%
- 67%

Agree that the outcomes of the 2020 election will make a significant impact on everyday issues involving their community

- 84%
- 71%
- 84%
- 80%

Have ever seen information about how to vote by mail or absentee

- 65%
- 61%
- 78%
- 50%

Would know where to go for information if their election were to shift to all mail-in ballots

- 64%
- 68%
- 76%
- 49%

Correctly identified whether or not their state has online voter registration

- 49%
- 58%

The same was also true for young people’s self-reported ability to find information about casting a ballot if their state’s election shifts to all-mail: 76% of youth who had been taught about voter registration and encouraged to vote in high school said they’d know where to get such information, compared to just 49% of their peers who had had neither experience. Likewise, 60% of youth in our survey who had received both encouragement and instruction on voting in high school correctly identified whether or not their state offered online voter registration, compared to 42% of youth who had not been afforded either experience.
When young people were both encouraged to vote and taught how to register to vote in school, these experiences seem to have had a compounding effect. Students who were exposed to both types of ‘civic support’ were more likely to have tried to convince other young people to vote. About half (49%) of young people who had only reported being taught how to register to vote in high school had worked to convince their peers to register, and 54% of youth who had been encouraged to vote in high school had tried to register others. However, among youth who had been both taught and encouraged to vote, 59% reported they’ve worked to register peers.

This analysis demonstrates that high school teachers’ guidance about, and enthusiasm for, student voting is important insofar as it not only impacts young people’s knowledge about current voting processes; it also builds students’ sense of skill or confidence navigating election information and prepares them to stay abreast of future changes to election systems. That said, high quality implementation and instruction should be an important consideration. A more detailed account of young people’s experiences would go a long way towards understanding differences in the implementation and the effects of these strategies on various outcomes.

Making the Most of the Months Ahead

The data is clear: young people’s experiences being taught and encouraged to vote in high school matter, and young people have the potential to impact elections in many ways this fall. It’s also clear that, because of COVID-19, schooling this fall is not business as usual. As educators, administrators, and parents work collaboratively to shape what students’ educational experiences look like in the months ahead, they must include voting and elections as part of that conversation for the sake of youth engagement in 2020 and for years to come.

They may start by looking at their state’s policies and statutes and clarifying what opportunities their state offers for engaging students in learning about or participating in elections. Educators and others can turn also to the Teaching for Democracy Alliance (TFDA), a 17-member coalition coordinated by CIRCLE, for resources on how to embed civic learning within classrooms, schools, and districts. We recommend teachers and administrators adopt an approach that is both holistic—incorporating media literacy, classroom discussion, and Action Civics/experiential learning alongside voter registration and education —and explicit, providing young people direct access to accurate and detailed information on registration and voting procedures. We cannot take for granted that young people will access this information on their own just because it is available online. Past CIRCLE studies have revealed that young people often prefer utilizing these online tools with the guidance of trusted adults, such as teachers, so that they can ask questions and ensure they’re filling out forms correctly.

In a year when teachers and administrators are facing extraordinary challenges, the challenge of helping youth be ready to vote remains one of the most crucial. It holds the potential to impact young people’s participation in the November elections and in the civic life of their communities for years to come.

[1]
This analysis is centered around two questions from the CIRCLE/Tisch College 2020 Youth Survey: “Did/have teachers in high school encouraged you to vote?” and “Did you learn about where and how to register to vote in high school?” We report on responses to these questions, and we use these questions as a filter for analyzing how participants answered other survey questions.

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