Citizen Participation in State & Local Government

Grade Level: Middle level- Catered to 8th Grade GSE Standards

Short Overview: Students will analyze state and local elections using current events. The first lesson is an introductory lesson to citizenship and voting in state/local elections. In the second lesson students will identify and analyze the issues and candidates running in state/local elections.

Length: Three 60-minute class periods (depending on the curriculum, this lesson can be extended to investigate and analyze multiple issues and current events).

Georgia Standards of Excellence:

SS8CG1 Describe the foundations of Georgia's government.
c. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens according to the Georgia Constitution.
d. List voting qualifications for elections in Georgia.
SS8CG3 Analyze the role of the executive branch in Georgia state government.
a. Explain the qualifications for the governor and lieutenant governor and their role in the executive branch of state government.
SS8CG6 Analyze the role of local governments in the state of Georgia.
a. Explain the origins and purposes, of city, county, and special-purpose governments in Georgia.

Evidence Outcome: Use a variety of resources to identify and evaluate issues that involve civic responsibility, individual rights, and the common good. Students can also use this activity to prepare for the Georgia Council for Civic Engagement (GCCE) Mock Election.

Preparation: Class set printed copies of the article("Statewide Ballot Questions…)" on all of the ballot measures up for vote in the November 8, 2022 Georgia election copies for each student of the following handouts: How Responsible Citizens Preparer to Vote, "In a Democracy, the Majority Rules…Or Does It?", Voter Survey, Responsible Citizens Vote, Making a Difference In Your Community, "Ballot Breakdown" ICivics (**see "Day 3" Lesson**) student documents.

Activities/Procedures:

Day 1

Opening (5-10 minutes):

Play Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yKP_IRAKaQ

Have students answer the following questions: What does citizenship mean? What does citizenship look like? Then have students share their answers with a partner. After, facilitate a whole class discussion on citizenship.

Work Period (45 minutes):

Connect the discussion about citizenship to the fact that students will be studying local elections and how responsible citizens are informed and involved in them.

Have students complete the handout "Responsible Citizens Vote." Students could work individually or with a partner. When they are finished, facilitate a whole class discussion about the answers. (10-15 minutes)

Next, complete the "In a Democracy, the Majority Rules…Or Does It?" handout/activity with the class. (25-30 minutes)

Closing activity (5 minutes):

Have students complete this ticket to leave: What is an issue that is important to you in your community? Why is it important? Do you think it is important to others?

Possible extensions and homework:

- Students could complete the handout "Making a Difference In Your Community"
- Students could also complete the handout "Voter Survey"
- Icivics Election 2022 Resources: https://www.icivics.org/election

Day 2

Opening (5-10 minutes):

Distribute pre-printed news article on 2022 or current ballot measures from the 2022 Georgia State Election (***see Lesson Resource Section*).** Remind students they are studying citizenship within the context of being involved in local elections. (5-10 minutes)

Work Period (45 minutes):

Pass out the handout "How Responsible Citizens Preparer to Vote" and review the worksheet with students. Tell students they should choose one article or ballot measure and complete the handout. (It might be easier for some students to choose from articles already clipped from a newspaper, instead of having to sift through the newspaper themselves.) Students could work individually or with a partner. You might want to show the students what you want by modeling an example in front of the class. Inform them they will also share their article and issue with the class. (5-10 minutes)

Have students pick a number from 1-5, then complete the handout using the article or ballot measure that correlates with the number they selected. (15 minutes)

Have students share their articles and ballot measures with the class. (10 minutes)

Closing (5 minutes):

Have students answer the following questions: Which ballot issue do you think is the most important, why? Which ballot issue do you think is the least important, why?

Day 3

Icivics Ballot Breakdown using the Georgia Race for Governor between Brian Kemp and Stacey Abrams for the upcoming 2022 state and local elections. Use the Ballotpedia.org site for Georgia 2022 Elections **to complete the organizer and reflection in the lesson. Step by step lesson instructions included in resources.**

Responsible Citizens Vote

Name:_____ Date: _____ Period: _____

When you described a very responsible citizen, did you include voting? One of the fundamental rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society is voting, and yet a surprisingly small number of citizens exercise the right.

1. Take a guess, what percent of citizens do you think voted in the 2018 election for Governor of Georgia? _____

2. Here's a math problem for you. In 2018 there were about 6,900,000 citizens eligible to vote.

   a. From this number about 4,000,000 actually voted in the election. How many eligible citizens did not vote? _____

   b. What percentage of the eligible voters did not vote? _____

3. Do these findings surprise you? Why or why not?

4. What is your opinion about voter turnout in the 2018 election?

In a Democracy, the Majority Rules…Or Does it?

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Here's an activity for your class to do that will demonstrate how low voter turnout at elections actually gives power to a minority of citizens. You are going to hold an election in your classroom with the same percent of voter participation as in the last Georgia election for governor in fall 2018. In that election, 4,045,613 out of 6,935,816 actually voted. Georgia had its highest turnout ever, with 58% of the registered voters casting their ballots.

Voting in My Class

How many students are in your class? _____

58% of this number is how many students? _____

(For example, if you have 30 students in your class, 58% of 30= 17 students.)

Next, with your classmates and teacher decide on one or more issues for your class to vote on.

Possible topics include:

-class officers
-how many nights a week to have homework
-where to go on the next field trip
-consequences for breaking class rules

Your teacher will randomly select who will register to vote and who will actually vote.
Hold the election and see the results.

Voting Feedback

1. Were you one of the students who were registered to vote? _____

2. Were you one of the registered students who actually voted? _____

3. How do you feel about the outcome of the election? _____

4. What factors influence your feelings about the outcome? _____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Adapted and Created by Melanie Kellam, M.A.Ed. 2022

Voter Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Interview at least 6 citizens over the age of 18-years old to determine their attitudes about voting. Share the results with the rest of your class.

Citizen #1:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

Citizen #2:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

Citizen #3:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

Citizen #4:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

Citizen #5:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

Citizen #6:

Age 18-21? Over 21? (Circle one)

Are you registered to vote? _____

Do you plan to vote in the last local election in November _____?

Why or why not?

How Responsible Citizens Preparer to Vote

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

How do responsible citizens deal with issues in their communities? You are going to find out. Using your local newspaper, clip articles about public policy decisions that affect your community. Then answer the questions below.

Using the Newspaper

1. What ballot measure (i.e. **Constitutional Amendment or Referendum**) you want to learn about?
   _____
   _____
2. What is the summary of the ballot measure?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
3. What are the arguments in favor of this issue?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
4. What are the arguments against this issue?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
5. A responsible citizen either agrees or disagrees with an argument, and decides to support or denounce the public policy or ballot measure. What are all the possible ways he/she can affect the outcome of this decision?
   _____
   _____
   _____
6. Why is it important for responsible citizens to be involved in this issue?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Making a Difference in Your Community

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

In the past few lessons you have learned a lot about state and local government and how it works. In this lesson you will see how people work together to make a difference in their community. You will learn about what it means to be a good citizen. Before we begin the lesson, think about what you already know about being a good citizen. Don't look up the answers to the questions below in a book, just think about the beliefs you have.

1. What is a "citizen?"

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. What is "good citizenship?"

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Compare your answers with the rest of your class. What were the similarities and differences?

Similarities	Differences

LESSON RESOURCES

- **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yKP_IRAKaQ-** This video provides an overview of the rights and responsibilities of American citizens.
- **https://www.icivics.org/ -** This website offers lessons and interactive activities that teach civic rights, civic responsibilities, and civic action. This cite offers links to lessons and activities aligned with most or all the Georgia Standards of Excellence 8th grade Government learning targets.
- **https://ballotpedia.org/Georgia_elections,_2022**
  https://ballotpedia.org/Georgia_gubernatorial_election,_2022 – This website offers all election ballot information, including ballot measures and elected official races. It summarizes candidates, offering positions on key issues. Students should use this site to complete the Icivics "ballot Breakdown" activity.
- **https://www.savannahnow.com/story/news/2022/09/09/georgia-statewide-election-ballot-questions-what-you-need-know/7940655001/ -** This website has the ballot measures up for a vote in the November 8th, 2022 election. Students should choose an amendment or referendum from the ballot to complete the **"How Responsible Citizens Preparer to Vote" activity.**