



Hey! You're Gonna Vote, Right?

(60 Minutes)

OBJECTIVE

- ✓ Learn why it is important to vote
- ✓ Consider reasons why eligible citizens do not vote in the United States

MATERIALS

- ✓ Lined writing paper or laptop
- ✓ Pen/pencil

GET READY

- ✓ Gather student implementation materials

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin the activity by telling the class to imagine that the school has just implemented a new program that rewards classes for having the fewest discipline issues each month.
2. Then announce that the students of this class have won the contest for this month, and they will be given an opportunity to go on a day-long field trip. The principal wants to know where they want to go. They can only go to one place.
3. Ask the students how they should decide where to go? Should the teacher choose? Should the principal choose? Should the student with the highest grade in the class choose? The goal is to get the students to conclude that they should vote on where they should go for their field trip.
4. Once the students conclude they should vote on where they should go for their field trip, ask them why they think voting is the best way to decide. Then follow-up with these questions:
 - Why does having input make a difference?
 - Why not let the teacher or principal decide?
5. Then ask the students the following questions:
 - How would the students feel if the teacher picked a place they thought was boring?
 - How would students feel if their suggestions weren't considered?
 - Would students feel worse if they didn't get to go where they wanted because they lost the vote or if they didn't have a say in choosing the field trip location?
 - Ask students to place on a scale of 1-10, how important it is to them to be able to vote on a classroom/school item that affects them. 1 being not important and 10 the most important.
6. Connect the idea of voting for a field trip location to that of voting in public elections. Everyone who meets the requirements to vote, is given the opportunity to express who they would like to lead their community or nation.
7. Inform the students that voting in elections allows citizens to have a say in who our leaders will be. Those leaders affect what laws are implemented. The laws affect our daily lives.
8. Ask students to call out some topics that are important to them and relate them to current laws or use examples below:
 - a. Driving: age you can drive, the graduated license, use of cell phone
 - b. School: age you must go to school, unexcused absences, what can be taught



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- c. Voting: age you can vote, who is eligible, proof of identity
9. Inform the students that when people vote for leaders, they choose leaders that have similar ideas as they do.
10. Think back to the field trip scenario. Pretend there are 2 peers running for class president. One candidate supports letting the principal decide on the class field trip without student input. The other candidate supports letting the students decide. Who would they vote for?
11. Share the information below with students¹:
 - In 2016 – 60% of the voting eligible population voted in the general election.
 - In 2018 – 50% of the voting eligible population voted in the mid-term elections.
 - In 2020 – 67% of the voting eligible population voted in the general election.
12. Provide each student with a piece of lined writing paper or use a laptop to complete a “quick write” activity. Ask students to answer the following question:
 - If it is important to have your opinion heard, why do you think people do not vote?
13. Give students 3-4 minutes to write their response to the question. During the “quick write,” students may not stop writing until the time has elapsed.
14. When time is up, have each student share with a partner what they wrote. While sharing, students need to identify similarities and differences in their answers.
15. Call on volunteers to share their responses with the class and record on the board.

16. Place students in small groups of 3-5 students in each group. Ask each group to discuss the benefits of voting by reflecting on the class discussion and field trip exercise.
17. Groups should then review the reasons people don't vote that was brainstormed and written on the board. They should discuss how not voting could impact their lives.
18. As a group, they should decide which is of most importance to them: taking the steps to vote or succumbing to the reasons not to vote.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

- ✓ Ask students to interview their parents or close family members and ask them in what election they last voted.
- ✓ If they did not vote, students should ask them the reasons for not voting.
- ✓ If they did vote, students should ask them why they think others do not vote and what could be done to encourage all eligible voters to cast their ballots.
- ✓ Students should record answers on paper and bring them to class for a group discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why is it important to vote?*
- ★ *What could you do to encourage your family members or community to vote?*
- ★ *If you had the power to change or improve the voting process, what would you do and how?*

¹ <http://www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data>