

Civic Knowledge & Action Project: Voter Registration Drive

Overview

Exploring political participation is one exciting way that students can complete their AP® U.S. Government & Politics project. In collaboration with [DoSomething.org](https://dosomething.org), a nonpartisan nonprofit that combines online organizing with offline events, interested students and teachers can run a voter registration drive in their community following the processes outlined in this project. This optional project meets the course curricular requirement by engaging students in the sustained, real-world application of their coursework. The following are important considerations to keep in mind as students select an applied civics project.

The project must require students to:

- Connect course concepts to real-world issues.
- Demonstrate disciplinary practices.
- Share/communicate their findings in an authentic way.

You should:

- Ensure that the project complies with local school/district guidelines and policies.
- Consider the length of the course (half year versus full year) when determining the complexity of the project.
- Ensure that the project is appropriate for:
 - Age and maturity of the student.
 - The availability of resources.
- Provide feedback to students about conceptual understanding and skill development.

SUGGESTED TIMING

The project should be completed over the course of several weeks, as directed by the DoSomething.org [START Leadership Program Guide](#). The project may be completed before or after the AP Exam or integrated throughout the course.

Connections to the AP U.S. Government & Politics Course Framework

- **Enduring Understanding MPA-3:** Factors associated with political ideology, efficacy, structural barriers, and demographics influence the nature and degree of political participation.
- **Disciplinary Practice 1.E:** Explain how political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors apply to different scenarios in context.
- **Enduring Understanding PMI-4:** Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.

Before You Start

This project is designed to complement the Civic Knowledge & Action in AP U.S. Government & Politics lesson on data analysis. Completion of this lesson will provide students with the appropriate background on **Topic 5.2: Voter Turnout**. This project may, however, be adapted for use at other times in the year.

PROJECT

Part 1 Signing Up for the Project

- Review the [START Leadership Program Guide](#) to understand the objectives of the program and the essential setup steps for your students. The Guide will provide everything students need to know:
 - Advice on how students can start a voter registration drive.
 - How students can talk to others about registering to vote.
 - What is on the voter registration form and how to fill it out.
 - Reporting on voter registrations and confirming completed forms are correct.
- Provide students with the [START Leadership Program Guide](#) from the [DoSomething.org](#) website. Allow students to review the overview provided by [DoSomething.org](#) on pages 1–6. As a class, review the expectations of engaging in this project by discussing “Running Your Voter Registration Drive” on pages 7–11.
- Determine which group of students would like to participate in this project, and have them sign up through [dosomething.org/startteacher5](#).
- If at any point during this project, you or your students have questions that are not answered in the Program Guide, please contact [DoSomething.org](#) at START@dosomething.org.

Before Moving On

This project should involve student participation in a nonpartisan service-learning opportunity. Students who choose to lead a voter registration should be prepared to develop strategies to engage citizens in their local community. Confirm your students have enrolled in the START program so that they have an accurate roadmap for running a voter registration drive.

Selecting Students for the Civic Engagement Project

Teachers should allow only one student group to run a START program per school to ensure maximum success for registering eligible students to vote.

Part 2 Completing the Project

- Coach your students through the establishment of a voter registration drive team.
 - Use the **11 steps** included in “Running Your Voter Registration Drive” to determine how the team should be structured and how to strategize a process for implementing the drive.
 - ◆ Confirm your students have built a team with a clear structure before engaging in the registration drive.
 - ◆ Alert your administration to the project your students have undertaken; school administration can provide clear guidelines of what students can and cannot do as it relates to political participation on a school’s campus.
- Provide students with support as they execute the 11 steps outlined by DoSomething.org and confirm that their communications are appropriate and aligned with local school policies throughout the duration of the project.
 - Offer students an opportunity to practice completing voter registrations with your guidance.
 - Review student promotional materials to confirm that they are nonpartisan and in alignment with local/district guidelines.
 - Confirm your students have sent completed forms to the Board of Elections as a concluding step in the project.

Before Moving On

Teachers should remind students that stances on issues should remain nonpartisan. The voter registration drive can tell people WHY they should vote but not WHO they should vote for. Teachers should confirm that all communication to/from students follows the simple rule that no candidates or parties should play any role in talking about voting. Finally, all forms must be returned to the Board of Elections for the registration drive to be complete.

Part 3 Debrief of the Project

- Celebrate the work the students accomplished by having students upload pictures from their voter registration drives into the Google Form provided by DoSomething.org so that their efforts can be highlighted along with other schools across the country.
- Provide students with the opportunity to share/communicate findings from having run a voter registration drive as part of the applied civics project for AP U.S. Government & Politics (e.g., presentation, speech, multimedia, podcast).
 - Student presentations should connect course concepts to the voter registration process and demonstrate an application of the AP U.S. Government & Politics disciplinary practices.
- Confirm students understood how political ideologies and political participation shape policy and choices in American politics by asking clarifying questions throughout the presentations:
 - Why do some people choose to participate in government while others do not?

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- How does who you are affect whether you participate or not?
- To what extent do you believe the establishment of a local, student-led voter registration drive contributed to increased civic participation in your community?

Before Moving On

Under our Constitution, effective governing is achieved through citizen participation. Students should be able to describe the many ways that increased voter registration can influence policymakers and impact the decisions that will affect their daily lives. Connections between this project and **Unit 5: Political Participation** of the AP U.S. Government & Politics course framework should be evident if students made the appropriate connections throughout the duration of the voter registration drive.