

Communication PRinciples for Principals

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EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE!



IDEA

Establish a link between DoDEA curriculum goals in social studies and civics and the exercise of the democratic privilege of voting.

Voting – a Citizen’s Call to Action

The right to vote can be exercised by all U.S. citizens in every corner of the world. Members of the military, their eligible family members, and other U.S. citizens overseas are able to vote under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA).

As a principal, how can you communicate this all-important right and privilege – the right to vote? What connections can you make for students in all grades? How do you emphasize the importance of this civic duty to your staff? Here are some ideas to help you get started!

The goal – to provide information to students about the voting process and to offer opportunities that encourage eligible students to exercise their right to vote by registering to vote and participating in upcoming elections.

The Audiences and the Messages

Chances are you’ll be targeting your messages to three audiences in your school community:

- Students who meet voting eligibility criteria;
- School staff and faculty; and
- Students who do not meet voting eligibility criteria, but who can benefit from the connection of voting to civic duty and government studies.

Your school’s voting awareness campaign should answer the following basic questions for each of the audiences above:

- Who is eligible to vote?
- Why is voter registration important?
- How does the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) help eligible students/family members serving overseas?



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- How can someone get more information about voter registration and absentee balloting?

First step – Identify a project officer at your school

The best place to start your school's voting initiative is by identifying a project officer who can coordinate with your community's Voting Assistance Officer, School Liaison Officer (SLO), and your school's staff.

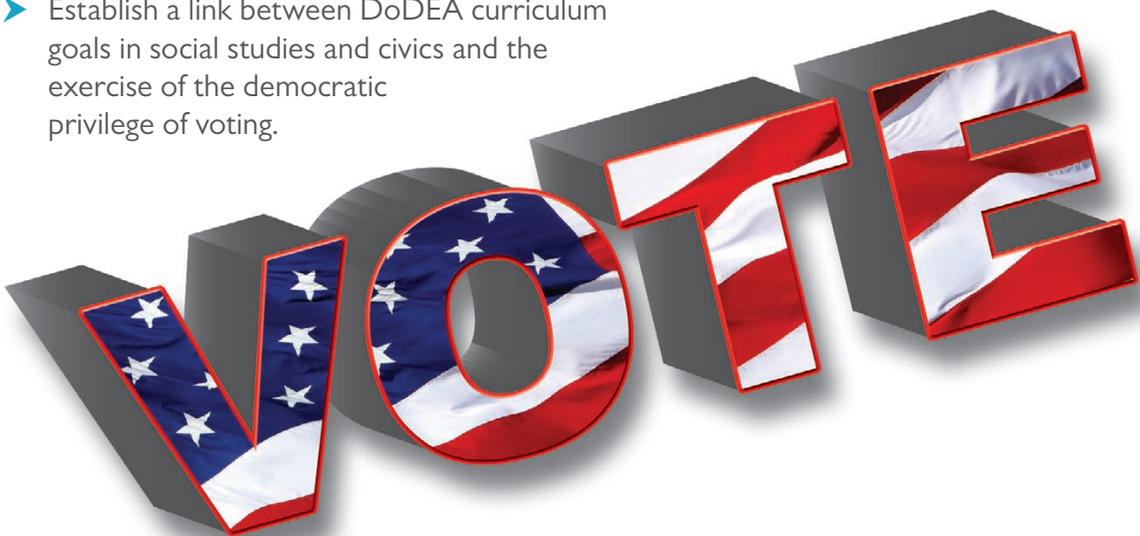
Your military community Voting Assistance Officer and School Liaison Officer – key to a successful voting program

Voting assistance officers are assigned to each military community. These contacts have programs already established in your community to help you organize school events. The SLO can help with coordinating an information campaign on voting registration and absentee ballots for any students who are or may become eligible to vote during the school year. The SLO can also help you seek support of planned voter registration drives within the military community.

Increasing voting awareness in your school

Principals can take an active role in their schools with regard to voting awareness. Here are just a few ideas:

- Establish a link between DoDEA curriculum goals in social studies and civics and the exercise of the democratic privilege of voting.



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TIPS



- Promote civic responsibility by incorporating the concept into social studies and civics classes. Sponsor an essay writing contest on voting in each grade level at your school.
- Host an assembly for eligible or soon-to-be eligible student voters.
- Make sure your administrative staff and faculty have adequate supplies of voter registration forms and other information to promote voting awareness.
- Seek the support of community voting officers and student groups in awareness activities.
- Foster partnerships from visiting dignitaries, military leaders, and others to take every opportunity to arrange speaking programs to talk with high school classes and other social studies/civics classes about the importance of voting.

Get more information!

Take a look at the websites of the following organizations for more information and ideas about implementing a voting awareness campaign in your school:

- League of Women Voters - <http://www.lwv.org/>
- Project Vote Smart - <http://www.votesmart.org/>
- Federal Voting Assistance Program - <http://www.fvap.gov/>