



CIVICS CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

CITIZENS CLEAN ELECTIONS COMMISSION ★ YOUTH VOTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

4th - 6th
GRADE LEVELS

LESSON 2
**RESEARCH AND INFORMATION
LITERACY SKILLS**



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Civics Classroom Curriculum

Research and Information Literacy Skills

 AZCleanElections.gov



TOPICS 	GRADE LEVEL
Disinformation Identifying credible sources	4 th – 6 th

INTRODUCTION

The Citizens Clean Elections Commission (CCEC), in partnership with expert curriculum writers, presents the Civics Classroom Curriculum lesson series, which covers a variety of relevant topics including democracy, elections, government, and the political party system. This is a part of CCEC’s youth voter education and outreach initiative.

These lessons in Civic Education aim to promote an understanding and appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy, encourage participation and civil dialogue, and develop civics skills such as critical thinking, researching, and determining fact versus fiction or opinion.

Research shows that lifelong voters cast their first votes early in life. The lesson plans adhere to Arizona’s classroom teaching standards and are applicable within more than one subject. The respective subjects are listed in the Integrated State Standards section of this module. The lesson plans were designed with teachers in mind and with utmost admiration for their important work.



LESSON PLAN:

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS



OVERVIEW

The following activities are designed for students in grades 4 through 6. It will be necessary for you to tailor your actual lesson to your grade level and student readiness. For instance, you may want to reduce the number of questions they are required to answer (for lower grades); simplify the questions (for ability levels) or expand on them (enrichment); do the activities in groups or individually; assign part of the lesson as homework; lead them through the entire lesson (direct instruction) rather than having them explore (inquiry); and determine how they will present their findings, e.g., discussions, a poster, a presentation using technology, a worksheet, etc.

We would also recommend that your students do this lesson in groups, including the research, the multimedia creation and the presentation. They could even “present” digitally by recording it using a screencast program or just narrating PPT slides. If they do this, then it opens the possibility that they could post their learning artifacts in a digital space (such as Edmodo, Google Classroom, Canvas, etc.) and give each other feedback (which is another set of technology skills).

Determining the credibility (reliable, unbiased) of a website and other media is a relevant and vital topic and a critical skill for students (and for us all). This is especially true when it comes to voting and elections. Students see many ads on TV and online about propositions and candidates. What a perfect opportunity to talk about bias. Who is paying for these ads? What is their agenda? How do we tell if what we’re looking at is biased, or if it is based on factual (and fact-checked) information? Which websites are legitimate and which have a motive which is designed to influence rather than inform? Where does the money come from to produce the content? Are the authors credible and are they who they say they are? It is important for students to be exposed to and learn to perceive the differences with guidance and practice.



***Important note:** On the day before the lesson, ask students to pay attention to at least one and perhaps two political or issue ads on TV, or find them somewhere online. Ask them to write down the gist of the ad: who it is for; what their claims are; who or what is being criticized; who produced/paid for the ads; and how they feel about the ads. If it is not an election cycle, prompt students to look up political ads from the most recent elections. Provide assistance by referencing some recent candidates or issues elections, e.g., Presidential, Senate, Prop 207 to legalize marijuana, Prop 208 to raise income taxes on those making over \$250k (\$500k for couples), or any local issues.

I. Materials needed

Students will need access to the internet and a laptop or computer.
Teacher and students will reference the Citizens Clean Elections Commission website (azcleanelections.gov)

II. Do Now/Warmup

Ask students to discuss with a peer the political or issue ads that they have seen on TV or heard on the radio (that you assigned yesterday). After giving them a few minutes to do so, ask them to share their responses and feelings. Talk about what students know about candidates, propositions, etc. Where did they learn that? (They will likely say TV). Are the ads helpful? Do they inform their opinions on whom to vote for? (Why or why not?). Discuss who produces/pays for those ads. How do they feel about negative ads? Talk about what the agenda seems to be and the potential biases that might arise.

III. Lesson Aim/Objective(s)

After doing some research of their own, students will participate in a closure discussion on the validity of particular websites and sources in order to exhibit their understanding of what makes a credible source versus an unreliable or biased one.

IV. The Why of the Lesson

It's important to vote, but how do you know how to vote on an issue or candidate? Where do you get your information? How do you ensure your vote is based on fact, not fiction? Informed voters are discerning citizens who are able to determine fact versus untruths or opinion, as well as detect unreliable websites and media versus credible sources.



V. Anticipatory Set

Now talk about websites in the same context. Websites often look professional and official, but that doesn't mean they aren't biased. Why? Because anyone can create a website and domain name that sound official and then put anything they want on it.

Talk about why it is important to not accept everything you read on a website or social media (or anywhere) as truth until you look for possible biases and agendas. Ask for the source. Look for the organization or person who is supporting or paying for the research. Ask yourself, what are they trying to get me to believe? Why?

Discuss how Google searches (and other search engines, like Bing) are influenced by methods (or even payments) that allow some websites to climb to the top of Google search and be among the first that you see regardless of fairness or accuracy. What does that mean when you are searching for information?

Discuss posts going viral. Have you ever reposted something that you then found out was inaccurate?

Prepare to project the following on the board:

azcleanelections.gov>How Elections Work>Under Election Security>
Avoiding Misinformation

Read through the "How to Spot False Information" section.

Practice: Ask students to find a .gov website that is trustworthy. Also find a website that is obviously biased but looks credible (or not so credible). Model samples of these. Discuss student examples.

VI. Instruction

1. Say...Now let's find out how to differentiate a credible website from an unreliable one. First let's go to the Citizens Clean Elections Commission website (azcleanelections.gov).
2. What's the first thing you notice about the website that might give you more confidence that it is unbiased? (It is a .gov website. Explain).
3. Explore the CCEC website. What seems to be the mission of the website?
4. Share one thing you found on the website that is interesting to you.
5. Google or visit Wikipedia for information on the Citizens Clean Elections Commission. Do you see any evidence of bias, either on the website or in your research on Google?
6. Put students into groups (of 3-5 depending on your circumstances).



7. Ask each group to pick a topic that interests them, for example, global warming, voting rights (e.g., vote by mail), immigration, health care, public education, clean energy, etc. If they cannot think of a topic, have them search “current issues” on the web. This is a good exercise to explore what other people think are pressing problems.
8. Then ask each group to find an article on the web that provides information on their topic.
9. Answer the following: Who wrote the article? What is the source of the article? Can you determine who funded the site? Google or search Wikipedia for information. Do they seem to have a particular point of view? Do you think the site is credible (trusted) or biased?

VII. Closure

Discussion: What do you need to look for when searching for sources on the internet for a project? What do you need to think about when you read an article or post on social media or another platform? What do you need to think about when you see a political ad on TV?

VIII. Assessment

Assign a research project that requires three sources that students must validate. Students could write an essay or make a presentation to the class on their topic.

Or: Choose a political ad from TV or online. Is it a positive ad or negative? Is it about policy (support of public education) or personality (credentials, experience)? Write a political ad for a candidate of your choice. Present it to your class.



INTEGRATED STATE STANDARDS

Choose from the following standards for your lesson

SOCIAL STUDIES

4.SP3.6 Present summaries of arguments and explanations using print, oral and digital technologies.

4.C1.1 Analyze civic virtues and democratic principles or lack thereof within a variety of government structures, societies and/or communities.

5.C2.1 Explain how a republic relies on people's responsible participation. Key concepts include but are not limited to volunteerism, joining associations and groups, joining political parties, using the First Amendment (free speech, religion, press, assembly, petition), censorship, voting in elections, running for office, working on campaigns, bringing cases to court, civil disobedience, protest movements and serving in the military.

6.C4.2 Describe and apply civic virtues including deliberative processes that contribute to the common good and democratic principles in school, community and government.

TECHNOLOGY

Grade 4

PO 1. Analyze information using digital creativity tools to create original works and express ideas.

PO 1. Communicate digitally with others by selecting and using a variety of appropriate communication tools.

PO 1. Contribute to a cooperative learning project and demonstrate effective group behaviors while using digital collaborative resources.

PO 3. Differentiate between fact and opinion, bias and inaccurate information.

Grade 5

PO 1. Analyze information using digital creativity tools to create original works and express ideas.

PO 1. Communicate digitally with others by selecting and using a variety of appropriate communication tools.

PO 1. Contribute to a cooperative learning project and demonstrate effective group behaviors while using digital collaborative resources.

PO 3. Evaluate between fact and opinion, bias, inaccurate and misleading information by consulting more than one source.



Grade 6

PO 1. Analyze information using digital creativity tools to create original works and express ideas.

PO 1. Communicate digitally with others by selecting and using a variety of appropriate communication tools.

PO 1. Communicate and collaborate for the purpose of producing original works or solving problems.

PO 3. Evaluate information and media through determining facts, opinion, bias and inaccuracies by consulting multiple sources.