

# CIVICS CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

CITIZENS CLEAN ELECTIONS COMMISSION ★ YOUTH VOTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

**7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>**  
**GRADE LEVELS**

**LESSON 4**  
**WHO ARE YOU VOTING FOR  
AND WHAT DO THEY DO?**



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# Civics Classroom Curriculum

## Who are You Voting for and What Do They Do?

 AZCleanElections.gov



TOPICS 	GRADE LEVEL
Elected Officials Government	<b>7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup></b>

### 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:

## WHO ARE YOU VOTING FOR AND WHAT DO THEY DO?



### OVERVIEW

It is important for students to know the roles and responsibilities of the people we elect and who represent us. These elected officials, like the President, Governor or Mayor, along with legislators and judges (elected or appointed), make decisions that affect our daily lives. They impact all of us in many ways, from trash collection to traffic lights to taxes to national defense. Their decisions affect students and their families and have an effect on how we feel about our government, including how and whether we vote. This lesson encourages students to learn about what federal, state and local elected offices there are, as well as their roles and responsibilities.

The following is a multi-day lesson plan for a middle school class. Appropriate State Standards are listed on the last page of this lesson plan.

This lesson is designed to be a student-centered discovery activity in which students research (on the Citizens Clean Elections Commission website: [azcleelections.gov](http://azcleelections.gov)) elected officials and the roles of government and apply their findings to current issues that affect themselves and their families. It may be either a class activity and a homework assignment or both. The lesson should include a discussion of their research after they have completed their packets. It is always important to discuss credible sources, digital responsibility and digital citizenship as well. This lesson provides a good opportunity to do so.

### I. Materials needed

Students will need access to the internet and a laptop or computer. Teacher will provide each student with the Research Study Guide included as an attachment with this lesson. Teacher and students will reference the Citizens Clean Elections Commission website ([azcleelections.gov](http://azcleelections.gov)).



## II. Do Now/Warm Up

Ask students to think of one or more elected officials that they are aware of, perhaps the President, the Governor, Mayor or a legislator. Ask students to write down what their impressions are of this official and to share their perspectives regarding the beliefs and policies of the official.

*\*Note to teacher: If the student response is not enough to generate a solid discussion, give them time to look up an elected official online and find out a little about what they stand for. You could have them do this on a Padlet or the chat window. That way they can see what other students are writing and can comment back. This will likely encourage a meatier discussion than doing it independently.*

After enough time for students to do so, lead a whole-class discussion of students' ideas. Focus on how these elected officials might affect the lives of students and their families. Be sure to discuss the idea of checks and balances (how each branch of government has powers to restrict the actions of the others).

## III. Student-Friendly Objective

Students will use a research study guide to research elected state and local officials and then have a discussion during closure to illustrate their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of these officials and the effects that their election and decisions have on students' lives and families.

## IV. The Why of the Lesson

It is important for students to study the roles and responsibilities of elected officials in order to understand who they are voting for, what jobs they do and how they affect citizens' daily lives. This understanding could be expected to motivate students to vote in the future as they realize the critical role they play in electing officials who will represent them well in terms of their ideals, values and practical needs.

## V. Anticipatory Set

Read aloud and discuss with students: Who provides the services that we take for granted until something happens and we don't receive them? How do we influence elected officials to prioritize the things that matter to us and our families? Who do we turn to when we need help from the government on an issue? What are the jobs of elected officials at the federal, state and local levels? In this lesson, we will look at these things and more so you can get acquainted with your state and local elected officials.



## VI. Lesson Delivery/Instruction

Teacher will provide the Study Guide that students will use to discover the roles and responsibilities of our state and local officials. To find the answers, students will use the Citizens Clean Elections Commission website: [azcleanelections.gov](http://azcleanelections.gov). Students may be asked to do the assignment individually, or you may choose to create groups and assign all or parts (“jigsaw” the lesson, having each group be responsible for only a portion of the study guide and then sharing their results with the rest of the class) of the assignment to the different groups. You may also consider having students do the research at home, as an assignment, thus reserving time in class for discussions or presentations (the “flipped classroom”).

## VII. Closure

Divide students into groups of three or four. Discuss: What did you find most interesting or surprising? What office might you be interested in running for someday? What office would you least like to run for? Share examples of elected officials and how each affects your daily life and that of your family. Who do you think affects your life the most? What elected official who represents you are you most impressed with? Have a whole-class discussion on what you learned today.

## VIII. Assignment

**Choice:** Find a current event/issue that is connected to one of the above state offices or local offices of your choice. How does the issue affect you and your family? Write a paragraph or two with your thoughts on each of the two issues. Send your finished essay to the letters to the editor at your local newspaper or to the elected official.

**Or:** Look up the website of one of your elected officials and see what they stand for. Do you agree or disagree with their beliefs? Write to that official expressing your beliefs and preferences.



## INTEGRATED STATE STANDARDS

Choose from the following standards for your lesson

### GRADE 7

**7.SP3.1** Create compelling questions and supporting questions that reflect enduring issues about the world, past and present.

**7.SP3.2** Use evidence drawn from multiple sources to develop and support claims and counterclaims in response to compelling questions.

**7.SP3.5** Evaluate the relevance and utility of sources based on information such as author, date, origin, intended audience and purpose.

**7.SP3.6** Construct and present arguments based on claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of those arguments.

**7.SP3.7** Construct and present explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

**7.SP4.3** Organize applicable evidence into a coherent argument.

**7.SP4.4** Compare the central arguments in multiple secondary sources on a related topic using multiple types of sources.

**7.RI.6** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

**7.RI.8** Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.

**7.RI.9** Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

**7.RI.10** By the end of the year, proficiently and independently read and comprehend informational texts and nonfiction in a text complexity range determined by qualitative and quantitative measures appropriate to grade 7.

**7.W.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- c. Use words, phrases and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons and evidence.

- d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**7.W.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above).

**7.W.6** Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

**7.W.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

**7.W.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

**7.W.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research. Apply grade 7 Reading Standards to informational text and nonfiction.

**7.SL.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- b. Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
- c. Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

**7.SL.4** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, appropriate vocabulary, facts, details and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume and clear pronunciation.

**7.SL.5** Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.



## GRADE 8

**8.SP4.6** Construct and present arguments based on claims and counterclaims while pointing out the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

**8.SP4.7** Construct and present explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

**8.SP4.8** Present arguments and explanations on topics of interest to others to reach multiple audiences in and outside of the classroom print, oral and digital technologies.

**8.C1.2** Demonstrate civic virtues that contribute to the common good and democratic principles within a variety of deliberative processes and settings.

**8.C1.3** Analyze the influence of personal interests and perspectives when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

**8.C1.4** Engage in projects to help or inform others such as community service and service-learning projects.

**8.C2.1** Analyze the powers of citizens in a variety of governmental and non-governmental contexts.

**8.C2.2** Explain specific roles, rights and responsibilities of people in a society.

**8.C2.3** Analyze concepts and ideals such as majority and minority rights, civil dissent and the rule of law.

**8.C3.1** Describe the impact of political and civic institutions such as political parties, interest groups, elections and the media in shaping policy. Key concepts include but are not limited to political party platforms, structure of parties on a national, state and local level including precincts, primary and general elections, presidential nominating system including conventions, congressional elections including congressional districts, gerrymandering and census, electoral college including how electors are chosen in Arizona, types of interest groups and role of the media.

**8.C3.3** Compare the structures, powers and limits of government at distinct levels in the United States.

**8.C4.2** Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.

**8.C4.3** Analyze the purpose, process, implementation and consequences of decision making and public policies in multiple settings and at different levels including the national, state, local (county, city, school board) and tribal.

**8.C4.4** Identify, research, analyze, discuss and defend a position on a national, state or local public policy issue including an action plan to address or inform others about the issue.



**8.C4.5** Analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at the local, regional and global levels, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to take action and solve the problem.

**8.H2.1** Explain how different beliefs about the government’s role in social and economic life have affected political debates and policies in the United States.

**8.RI.1** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**8.RI.2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

**8.RI.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**8.RI.9** Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

**8.RI.10** By the end of the year, proficiently and independently read and comprehend informational texts and nonfiction in a text complexity range determined by qualitative and quantitative measures appropriate to grade 8.

**8.W.1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- c. Use words, phrases and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence.
- d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**8.W.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

**8.W.6** Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.



**8.W.7** Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

**8.W.8** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

**8.W.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research. Apply grade 8 Reading Standards to informational text and nonfiction.

**8.W.10** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes and audiences.

**8.SL.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- a. Come to discussions prepared having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- b. Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines and define individual roles as needed.
- c. Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas.
- d. Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views based on the evidence presented.

**8.SL.2** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

**8.SL.4** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume and clear pronunciation.

**8.SL.5** Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.