



# CIVICS CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

CITIZENS CLEAN ELECTIONS COMMISSION ★ YOUTH VOTER EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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

Evaluating Information Sources

**7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>**

## 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:

## YOUR RIGHT IS TO VOTE



### OVERVIEW

Determining the credibility (unbiased, reliable) 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 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 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 research, or if there is an election going on at the time of the lesson to pay attention to, at least one and perhaps two political or issue ads on TV or the radio. 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.

### I. Materials needed

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

### II. Do Now/Warm Up

Ask students to find a peer to discuss the political or issue ads that they researched. 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. Talk about what the agenda seems to be and the potential biases that might arise.



### III. Student-Friendly Objective

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 and 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 on 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? What are the implications of doing so?
- Prepare to project the following on the board:
- [Azcleelections.gov](https://www.azcleelections.gov/How-Elections-Work/Under-Election-Security/Avoiding-Misinformation)>How Elections Work>Under Election Security>Avoiding Misinformation
- Read through with students 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. Lesson/Delivery

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. Search for information on the Citizens Clean Elections Commission. Do you see any evidence of bias, either on the website or in your research?
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. (Refer back to the Texans for Natural Gas example). Do they seem to have a particular point of view? Do you think the site is credible (trusted) or biased?

## VII. Closure

Divide students into groups of three or four.

**Discuss:** 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 see a post on social media? What do you need to think about when you see a political ad on TV? Share out group responses.

## VIII. Homework

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

### GRADE 7

**7.PO.1** Locate and synthesize information utilizing advanced search strategies.

**7.PO.2** Use authoritative primary and/or secondary sources.

**7.PO.3** Evaluate between fact and opinion, bias, inaccurate and misleading information by consulting multiple sources.

**7.PO.4** Synthesize research information to create new understanding or develop new ideas.

**7.PO.5** Apply ethical use of information and media by respecting copyrights, intellectual property rights, using information and media technology responsibly and citing resources appropriately.

### GRADE 8

**8.PO.1** Locate and synthesize information utilizing advanced search strategies.

**8.PO.2** Evaluate and use authoritative primary and/or secondary sources.

**8.PO.3** Evaluate between fact and opinion, bias, inaccurate and misleading information by consulting multiple sources.

**8.PO.4** Synthesize research information to create new understanding or develop new ideas.

**8.PO.5** Apply ethical use of information and media by respecting copyrights, intellectual property rights, using information and media technology responsibly and citing resources appropriately.



## COMMUNICATION AND CREATION

### Creating a digital presentation or learning artifact

Currently in lesson 3, students are researching then writing an essay. It is noted that a possible extension could be to create a digital presentation. I recommend replacing the essay with the digital artifact. In MS, they should all be practicing these skills, synthesizing and presenting.

I would also recommend they do this in groups, the whole thing including the research AND the multimedia creation AND the presentation.

If you make this revision then I see many tech standards that align:

### GRADE 7

#### Creativity and Innovation: Original Works

**7.PO.1** Create innovative products or projects using digital tools to express original ideas.

**7.PO.2** Use digital collaborative tools to synthesize information, produce original works and express ideas.

### GRADE 8

#### Creativity and Innovation: Original Works

**8.PO.1** Create innovative products or projects using digital tools to express original ideas.

**8.PO.2** Use digital tools to collaborate with a group to communicate original ideas, products or projects effectively in a creative or innovative style.

### GRADE 7

#### Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making: Exploring Solutions

**7.PO.1** Plan, conduct and manage research using appropriate digital resources to develop solutions for a question.

**7.PO.2** Present defensible solutions and make decisions from multiple perspectives using collected resources and data.

### GRADE 8

#### Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making: Exploring Solutions

**8.PO.1** Plan, conduct and manage research using appropriate digital resources to develop solutions for a question.

**8.PO.2** Present defensible solutions and make decisions from multiple perspectives using collected resources and data.





## **GRADE 7**

### **Communication and Collaboration:**

#### **Effective Communications and Digital Interactions**

**7.PO.1** Collaborate and communicate with peers, experts or others employing a variety of digital tools to share findings and/or publish.

## **GRADE 8**

### **Communication and Collaboration:**

#### **Effective Communications and Digital Interactions**

**8.PO.1** Collaborate and communicate with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital tools to share findings and/or publish.

## **GRADE 7**

### **Digital Solutions**

**7.PO.1** Collaborate and communicate for the purpose of producing original works or solving problems.

## **GRADE 8**

### **Digital Solutions**

**8.PO.1** Collaborate and communicate for the purpose of producing original works or solving problems.

## **GRADE 7**

### **Technology Operations and Concepts: Applications**

**7.PO.5** Create and edit visual and audio material to generate a multimedia product.

## **GRADE 8**

### **Technology Operations and Concepts: Applications**

**8.PO.5** Create and edit visual and audio material to generate a stand-alone multimedia product.

**GRADE 7****Digital Citizenship: Safety and Ethics**

**7.PO.6** Exhibit legal and ethical behavior when using technology.

**GRADE 8****Digital Citizenship: Safety and Ethics**

**8.PO.6** Exhibit legal and ethical behavior when using technology.

**GRADE 7****Leadership for Digital Citizenship**

**7.PO.1** Promote digital citizenship by consistently leading by example and advocating social and civic responsibility to others.

**GRADE 8****Leadership for Digital Citizenship**

**8.PO.1** Promote digital citizenship by consistently leading by example and advocating social and civic responsibility to others.