

Name of Program: Civic Engagement - Lawmaker Research

Target Audience: Primarily Seniors

Strategy for Implementation: Group discussion with an activity

Time of Year to Implement: Anytime, perhaps best for election times of the year, local or federal.

Relevant Learning Goal: Goal 2: Life Skills - In a residential environment, students must learn skills that will help them lead healthy, independent lives in their adolescence and beyond. Students will display growth as/evolve into competent, self-sufficient individuals that are capable of overcoming personal and professional challenges.

Specific Lesson Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate competence in skills essential to thrive in a professional setting
- Students will demonstrate competence in personal life skills required to live independently
- Students will practice steps for positive decision making
- Students will develop an ethical mindset to approach difficult situations

Purpose: Students will learn how to research their state and federal elected officials, view their elected official's voting records, how to advocate for themselves and their community.

Planning and Preparation:

This program contains an ancillary [Prezi presentation](#) that can be used for the guided overview of the websites students will be using to explore their elected official's track record and their viewpoints.

- It is recommended that you, as the facilitator, research your local officials to provide an example of what our students ought to learn from the research on the websites.

Slide 2:

- Who's your lawmaker? Students will have a list of sites to choose how or where they research their representatives.

Slide 3:

- Students should be able to collect the following information:
 - Contact information (phone number or email address)
 - Local & Federal Offices
 - It is recommended that you, as the facilitator, research your local officials to provide an example of what our students ought to learn from the research on the websites.
 - Allow the students to research their representatives, give students up to 10 minutes to do this.

Slide 4:

- Example of federal representatives

Slide 5:

- Example of State representatives
- IL Representative, Barbara Hernandez, was once an RC and may be a point of contact for IMSA students looking to gain perspectives or further information.

Slide title "View Voting Record":

- Students ought to be able to use either govtrack or votesmart to research their representatives' voting record.

Slide 9

- Example images of how issues were voted upon

Slide title "Research + Outcomes"

- Emphasis that viewing voting records allow for educated decision making at the ballot box.
- Allow students to research a topic of their choice and present their findings with the wing or in a breakout room.

Slide title "Utilizing Knowledge"

- Allow students to draft a mock letter to their representative based on their own experience or knowledge on the matter.
 - Students can share their letter in the wing or in a breakout room.
- Propose students to think about how they ought to behave on social media when interacting with politicians or professionals.
 - Students can draft a mock tweet to a representative if they so choose to do so.

Slide title "Useful Websites"

- Promote self advocacy by means of promoting your causes or topics of interest via sites like CommonCause, Causes, VoteSmart and BallotReady.
- Advocacy for yourself and the community is a part of civic engagement.

Slide title "Findings & Conclusion"

- Review what students should have learned

- Allow students to share their experiences with these sites, any recommendations or suggestions from our students?

Resources:

Websites to advocate for your interests:

- <https://www.commoncause.org/>
- <https://www.causes.com/>
- <https://www.govtrack.us/>

Website to track a bill's status

- <https://www.congress.gov/>
- <https://www.ilga.gov/default.asp>

Websites to look up a candidate's stance on issues

- <https://www.ballotready.org/>
- <https://votesmart.org/>
- <https://www.causes.com/>
- <https://www.commoncause.org/>

Website to find your representative

- <https://www.congress.gov/members?q={%22congress%22:117}&searchResultViewType=expanded>
- <https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/>
- <https://www.ballotready.org/>
- <https://votesmart.org/>

Assessment:

1. Why is it important to research your lawmakers?
2. How will you go about researching your lawmakers in the future? What platforms/techniques will you use?

What is one reason that you would contact your representative/senator?

References:

https://static.votesmart.org/static/pdf/2020_VSDM.pdf