
V O T E

DECISIONS! *ACTIVITY*

OBJECTIVE:

Students explore how citizens decide to vote.
Students research the candidates' positions on important issues
and their leadership qualities.



Ask your students the following questions:

- Do you know how citizens decide who to vote for in an election?
- Are these factors the same for all citizens?
- What resources do you think they use to find information on candidates?

Candidates can be judged in many ways. The two most common are the positions they take on issues (for example: economy, education, health care) and the leadership qualities they would bring to the office. Both play a role in deciding who to vote for in an election. Before voting, it is important to decide the issues you care about and the qualities you want in a leader. Then you need to research the candidates to see who fits your priorities best.

ISSUES

Explain to your students that informed voters examine the issues. Candidates will take a stand on each issue and voters will evaluate these stands to make their decision. Voters will be more interested in those issues which directly affect them. Often candidates and voters do not agree exactly on the issues, so voters must decide what is most important to them.

Lead a class brainstorming session to generate a list of issues that students think are important in New Jersey. This list might include topics such as:

- The Economy
- Education
- The Environment
- Health Care
- Housing
- Taxes

Discuss the basic details of each issue and ask students which issue is most important to them.

To help students decide who to vote for, they need to find out the candidates' position on these important issues. Ask your students: Where do voters gather information about candidates?

- Web sites (Are all Web sites trustworthy?)
- Newspapers
- Television and radio
- Mailings from candidates
- Social media
- Friend and family opinions

Divide the class into groups. Give each group an issue to research. The students should create a poster showing each of the candidates' position on the issue. Tell the students to use a variety of resources. Encourage the students to decorate the poster with images that help explain the issue. Display the posters until Election Day.

LEADERSHIP

A leader is a person who can guide or direct others. As head of the Executive Branch, the governor needs to be a leader. The same is true for legislators who represent the people in a legislative district. However, multiple qualities can contribute to an individual's ability to be a leader and individuals do not need to possess each quality to be a leader.

Ask your students: What are some of the qualities of being a leader? What qualities are most important for a governor or legislator?

- Honesty
- Dedication
- Creativity
- Experience
- Fairness
- Intelligence
- Confidence

Distribute copies of the candidates' biographies and read them aloud. Then have students read the biographies silently and circle information that demonstrates a quality of leadership. Above the circle, list the quality that the information describes. Have students share what leadership qualities they believe each candidate possesses, and why. Information on the candidates is available at Ballotpedia.org.

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

Ask the students to write an essay sharing two leadership qualities they possess that make them a good leader.

ACTIVITY EXTENSION

Ask your students to watch a candidate debate. Tell your students to select one issue prior to the debate. During the debate, ask your students to list each of the candidates' positions on their selected issue. Also ask your students to write down one leadership quality each of the candidates demonstrates during the debate. Discuss the results with your class the following day.