



**Maryland State Department of Education**  
**Service-Learning Unit**  
**Voting Counts**

**North Dorchester Middle School, Hurlock, MD**  
**8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies**  
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**Primary Subject:** Social Studies-U.S. History

**Grade Level:** 8th

**Additional Subject Area Connections:**

Language Arts, Math, and Art

**Unit Title:** Voting Counts

**Type(s) of Service:** Advocacy

**Unit Description:** Students will research voter apathy and related issues in Dorchester County. Students will design and develop posters to be placed in the community to encourage the adult population to participate by voting in the next election.

**Potential Service-Learning Action Experiences:**

Design posters and find local businesses that are willing to display the posters until after the election. Posters will include messages to encourage voter turnout by increasing the awareness of voting as a civic responsibility. Students may decide, with teacher approval, to do an alternative project. Examples of past alternative projects are public service announcements, speaking at the P.A.T. meetings, and creating a display of a large United States flag that is composed of over 150 individual voting messages.

**Maryland State Curriculum Indicators Met**

**Social Studies (8<sup>th</sup>)**

**Standard 1.0 Political Science**

B. Individual and group participation in the Political System

1. Analyze the influence of individuals and groups on shaping public policy
- c. Evaluate ways the citizens should use, monitor and influence the formation and implementation of public policy.
2. Explain the importance of civic participation as a citizen of the United States
  - a. Evaluate ways people can participate in the political process including voting, analyzing the media, petitioning elected officials, and volunteering.

**Standard 6.0 Social Studies Skills and Processes**

2. Identify a situation/issue that requires further study
  - a. Define the situation/issue
  - b. Identify prior knowledge about the situation/issue
  - c. Pose questions about the situation/issue from a variety of perspectives
  - d. Pose questions that elicit higher order thinking responses
  - e. Formulate research questions
  - f. Develop a plan for how to answer questions about the situation/issue

# Alignment with Maryland's Best Practices of Service-Learning: *Voting Counts*

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**1. Meet a recognized community need**

Students in Dorchester County middle schools met the community needs of increasing the awareness of voting as a civic responsibility and increasing voter turnout in our county. Our goal was not only to reach those members of the community who had not registered, but to concentrate on the number of voters who were registered yet still did not participate in prior elections.

**2. Achieve curricular objectives through service-learning**

See list on previous page.

**3. Reflect throughout the service-learning experience**

Reflection occurs at various points in the project. Shared individual and group reflections take place throughout the project which helps to keep the focus and steer the project towards the end goal.

Reflection occurs through discussion, analyzing survey results, researching data, conversations with community members and an individual written analysis of the entire experience at the completion of the project.

**4. Develop student responsibility (Students have opportunities to make decisions about the service-learning project.)**

The student is actively involved in every step of the project. The teacher provides background information on voting to the student at the beginning of the project, but then moves to the role of facilitator. Students gather, compile and discuss local voting data to determine the specific needs of the community. Each student designs a poster to promote voting and makes contact with community businesses or organizations to publicize the issue. In addition, students can create additional projects or extensions of the original plan. At the end of the project, students collect post election data to compare with the data taken at the beginning.



**5. Establish community partnerships**

Students will establish community partnerships with individual businesses and community organizations of their choice when making contacts to find a place to publicize their poster. Data and consultation will be provided by the following community organizations:

League of Women Voters of Mid-shore Maryland in Dorchester County  
Phone – 410-463-0457

Email – [info@midshore.lwvmd.org](mailto:info@midshore.lwvmd.org)  
Website – [www.midshore.lwvmd.org](http://www.midshore.lwvmd.org)

Dorchester County Board of Elections  
Karen Kuntz, Election Director  
Phone – 410-882-2560  
Email – [kkuntz@docoqonet.com](mailto:kkuntz@docoqonet.com)  
Website – [www.elections.state.md.us/](http://www.elections.state.md.us/)

## 6. Plan ahead for service-learning

Teacher –

- Enlist and plan with other disciplines that may be helping with the project such as grade level team members, art teachers and administrators.
- Establish background information on service-learning and voting, arrange for guest speakers, schedule research and computer lab/media center time, and gather basic supplies needed for posters.

Students –

- Research, analyze and discuss the local voting needs of Dorchester County.
- Work with other teachers to help with data analysis and artistic ideas.
- Work with the community partners to answer specific voting questions, provide recent data and share publications that would be beneficial. Guest speakers, such as local politicians or volunteers from the polling sites, offer extended knowledge and points of view for our planning.
- Use the data to develop the voting poster message.
- Contact local businesses and organizations to plan for the poster placement in the community.

## 7. Equip students with knowledge and skills needed for service

Introduce the service-learning project by discussing service-learning and citizenship with students and engaging in activities to explore those themes. Review and discuss research skills and appropriate use of the internet. Students researched and read articles on the importance of voting and how it can impact a community. Students gathered and analyzed local data to make informed planning decisions. Communication skills were practiced through role playing prior to the students making contact with community partners and businesses. Students also participated in surveys to collect data, practiced how to fill out a voter registration form, and learned new vocabulary words associated with service-learning and voting.

Resources to support these topics can be found at  
[www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring\\_learning/](http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring_learning/).

Read and reflect on the **History of the Vote** by Phyllis Naegeli  
<http://www.edhelperblog.com/cgi-bin/vspec.cgi>

# Procedures with Resources: *Voting Counts*

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## Preparation:

1. Introduce the service-learning project by discussing service-learning and citizenship with students and engaging in activities to explore those themes. A resource to support this topic can be found at [www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring\\_learning/](http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring_learning/)
2. Read, answer questions and discuss the **History of the Vote** by Phyllis Naegeli <http://www.edhelperblog.com/cgi-bin/vspec.cgi>
3. Develop a master list brainstormed by the students of why voting is important.
4. Practice filling in a voter registration form and students take home a voter survey to discuss and fill in with their parents.
5. Tally and discuss survey results.
6. Research and discuss the county voting data to determine the local voting needs. Schedule time with the math teacher if assistance with data analysis is needed.
7. Meet with local community leaders/guest speakers for additional information and assistance with questions.
8. Complete rough draft of ideas for voting poster, proof read for spelling errors and understanding of concept. Have the art teacher and language arts teachers assist in proofing the rough drafts.
9. Complete final copy of poster.
10. Develop a list of several businesses or organizations to contact regarding the display of your poster.
11. Begin contacting businesses to explain the cause you are working for and to ask permission to publicize the poster until after Election Day.

## Action:

- Students will display the poster they have developed in the business or community organization that they previously contacted and received permission from. At the time the student displays the poster in the business/organization, the student and the business owner/organization director will sign a letter that the student can use as documentation of completion of activity.

## Reflection:

1. Ongoing reflection throughout the project to reinforce the significance of their service learning experience in relationship to citizenship and civic duty.

### Additional Interdisciplinary Connections



**Art:** Poster Development  
**Language Arts:** Grammar, Spelling, Practice with communication skills prior to contacting community organizations or businesses  
**Math:** statistics, reading data tables, analyzing data

2. Once the new voting data from the county has been posted, students will compare the prior election data to the current election data.
3. Discuss the impact of the project and what students have learned through the process.
4. Reflect and evaluate the effectiveness of the project by completing the *Rubric for Assessing the Use of the Maryland's Seven Best Practices of Service-Learning* which can be found at [www.mdservice-learning.org](http://www.mdservice-learning.org).
5. Complete individual reflection essay which will become a part of the students' permanent school record.

**Text References: The American Republic to 1877 Glencoe © 2007**

**Web Sites:**

[www.mdservice-learning.org](http://www.mdservice-learning.org)

<http://www.edhelperblog.com/cgi-bin/vspec.cgi>

[www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring\\_learning/](http://www.servicelearning.org/resources/bring_learning/)

[www.elections.state.md.us/](http://www.elections.state.md.us/)

[www.midshore.lwvmd.org](http://www.midshore.lwvmd.org)

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