

Exploring the Importance of Your Local Voice & Vote with First Vote

Overview

While the national elections may get the most attention, we can't forget that American democracy requires active engagement every year, especially at the local level. Local elections provide the perfect opportunity to make students aware of issues happening in their own communities and highlight the impact local government has on every single one of us. By utilizing the First Vote [lessons](#) for educating students about the services provided by and importance of local government, providing chances for students to actually interact with local government officials, and allowing students to participate in the First Vote municipal election simulation (which includes thought provoking issue-based questions in addition to local offices up for election), students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the relevance of municipal government. This guide provides various ways to prepare students for participating in the First Vote local election simulation, as well as offers suggestions for how students can interact with local government officials throughout and/or after the election process.

Materials

- Quotes about voting, attached
- Preparing a Presentation for Local Government Officials, attached
- **OPTIONAL: HAVE STUDENT WORK FEATURED ON EdNC!** If your students communicate their school's election results or results of their local issue-based questions to local government bodies in some way (i.e., a live presentation at a meeting, a writing assignment, etc.) and you are interested in having them featured on [EdNC](#), contact Hunter Buxton, Executive Director of First Vote NC at hunterbuxton@gmail.com for more information. This can be a great way to feature great students, great teaching and great schools!

Duration

Varies (based on which activities teachers choose to implement)

Student Preparation

Students should have a basic understanding of local government and its relevance and importance to every citizen and community member. Ideally, students will have completed lessons/activities such as:

- City Government – Why Should I Care??? | [LESSON](#) | [ACCOMPANYING POWERPOINT](#)
- Choice, Conflict & Compromise at the County Level | [LESSON PLAN](#) | [ACCOMPANYING POWER POINT](#)
- Turn Up the Turnout: Overcoming the Obstacles to Voting in Local Elections | [LESSON PLAN](#) | [ACCOMPANYING POWERPOINT](#)
- Additional local government lesson plans and resources can be found in Carolina K-12's [Database of K-12 Resources](#).
- *Online Textbook: Local Government in North Carolina*, available at <https://www.sog.unc.edu/publications/books/local-government-north-carolina-fourth-edition-2012-0>

Procedure

Exploring the Importance of Your Local Voice with First Vote

1. As a warm-up, provide one of the attached visual quotes about voting to students to briefly discuss in pairs. They should consider:
 - What message does this quote convey regarding the importance of voting?
 - Why is it important to vote in local elections in particular?

2. After a few minutes have students report out regarding their thoughts. Use this as an opportunity to briefly review all the various ways students have learned that local government matters. Remind students that in an odd numbered year, municipal elections all across North Carolina will be held in the fall. Municipal elections occur between September and November, depending on what style of election the municipality uses.
 - Teachers can go to <https://www.ncsbe.gov/Elections/2017-Election-Information> for information about the offices that will be up for election locally, as well as local election dates, which vary by municipality.
 - Share this information with students, and let them know that they will have the opportunity to vote in this year’s municipal elections via an online election simulation, designed to be as close to the real thing as possible. There will also be exit polling, including demographic questions and issue-based questions to answer.
- **Teacher Note:** *Even though the 2017 elections will only have few offices to vote on, teachers may still be interested in having students go through the critical thinking activity of designing their schoolwide municipal election (or a condensed version of such), using First Vote’s “[Making First Vote YOUR Vote: Designing a Schoolwide Election](#).” This lesson also involves students grappling with ongoing and universal issues such as Early Voting, Voter ID laws, etc., that teachers may want to implement. Additional lessons ranging from topics on the importance of voting to how to register and vote can be found on the [First Vote website](#).*

Preparing to Vote in the Local Election Simulation

3. With 2017 being a municipal election year, each school’s ballot of candidates will be different (i.e., ballots may or may not include candidate(s) for city council, mayor, school board, etc.) Encourage students to educate themselves about all the local candidates before voting. Aside from your local newspaper or local TV news station’s website, the following websites can provide students with balanced, non-partisan information about the candidates and their positions on the issues:
 - WRAL Voting Resources: http://www.wral.com/news/local/politics/asset_gallery/2529683/
 - Ballotpedia Local Politics: https://ballotpedia.org/Local_Politics
 - Charlotte Observer Local Politics: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/election/>
 - League of Women Voters of North Carolina: <https://lwwnc.org/>
 - NC Voter: <http://www.ncvoter.org/>
 - Project Vote Smart: <https://votesmart.org/> (For federal and state elections)
 - Vote 411: <http://www.vote411.org/>
 - NC Voter Guide: <http://www.ncvoterguide.org/>

Preparing for the Election

4. In order to prepare for the upcoming local election, teachers might implement one (or more) of the following activities. While these can be time consuming, devoting attention to local election activities can help students understand the importance and relevance of being involved in and aware of their local government.
 - **Create a First Vote Voter Guide:** Have students pick the issues that are important to them and then design a voter guide that lists where each local candidate stands on each issue. If a candidate’s stance isn’t publicly known, encourage students to contact the candidates directly. (A sample voter guide from the 2016 election, illustrating the types of information students might want to collect for their local candidates, is available from Vote 411, here: <http://www.vote411.org/voter-guide-2016#.WbgmMtN94Wo>. Another option is to have students research and then rate their local government candidates. See this example from [Generation Nation](#), the format of which could be tailored for use with local elections: www.generationnation.org/documents/ratethecandidates_NCSen3.pdf

- **Host a First Vote Debate Watching Party:** Although debates among local government officials aren't as widely publicized as presidential debates, they are usually held locally and available to stream anytime via your candidates' or local government's website. If your local station or government website streams the debate, host a debate party (watching live or the day after.)

To make a game of debate watching, play "Debate Bingo." Provide students with blank bingo cards and allow them to fill in the squares with terms or phrases from a pre-selected list. Instruct students to mark the appropriate square every time a candidate says one of the words. A sample bingo game from the 2016 President Debates is available here: <http://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/play-presidential-debate-bingo-download-cards-or-play-online/> Teachers can use this format as a starting point, but tailor the cards to feature local words/phrases that are likely to come up.

- **Organize a First Vote Candidate Forum or Debate at School:** Encourage students to reach out to all the local candidates and host a candidate forum or debate at your school (with your administrator's permission). Students should invite the candidates, choose the format (debate, forum, panel discussion, etc.), write the questions, contact the local media, advertise, plan, budget, etc. While geared for a general public event, Rock the Vote's guide for hosting a candidate event offers some good universal tips for a local candidate forum/debate: <https://www.rockthevote.com/wp-content/uploads/publications/field/host-a-candidate-forum-how.pdf>
- **Design Some Candidate Swag:** Allow students to design campaign swag for their favorite local candidate. Campaign swag can include hats, mugs, shirts, bumper stickers, jewelry, or something more off-beat like a [guacamole bowl](#). Students should be as creative as possible. Encourage students to submit their designs to the actual candidates. For examples of campaign swag, see here:
 - <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-23-most-interesting-pieces-of-official-romney-and-obama-campaign-swag-2012-9>
 - <https://medium.com/purple-politics/the-worst-best-campaign-swag-66d7c7ed799b>
- **Create-a-Campaign:** Allow students to choose their favorite local candidate and in groups, design a campaign for their candidate. Some ideas for campaign materials include:
 - Radio Campaign to be played/performed during morning announcements
 - Campaign Posters that include information about your candidate
 - TV Commercial Campaign to be uploaded to YouTube or similar video hosting site
 - Social Media Ads

Additional ideas can be found in Carolina K-12's ["Get out the VOTE!"](#) lesson.

Exit Polls and Issue-Based Question(s)

5. In addition to your school customizing your First Vote ballot for local offices up for election, the ballot will also contain exit poll data that all voters across the state will complete, the results of which can make for interesting post-election discussions. Exit poll data that will be collected includes:
 - Grade
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Do the adults in your household vote?
 - Do you plan on registering to vote when you are eligible?
 - If you were to register today, what would be your party affiliation?
 - What is your primary source of political news?
6. Another exciting component of the First Vote online simulation, some of which can be customized, are its issue-based questions which student voters will answer as part of their "exit polling." Several issue-based

questions will be automatically included on the ballot, which will allow for students to compare their school's response to responses of students statewide. Students will rank the following statements on a scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree:

- I am interested in internship opportunities connected to my high school.
- Most of my classes are small enough to meet my academic needs.
- There is at least one adult (i.e., teacher, coach, counselor) at my school I can talk to about personal issues.
- There are enough economic opportunities in my community that if I wanted to remain or return after high school and/or college graduation, I could.
- Relationships between police and members of the community are positive.
- Decisions regarding monuments should be made by a statewide entity as law currently states, rather than local government and their communities.
- There are satisfactory parks and recreation facilities in my community for young people.
- Climate change is an issue that my local government should be addressing.
- Local government has an impact on my daily life.

7. To allow students to delve into local issues in their school, town, county, etc., ballots can be customized by the school to contain additional issue-based questions (as many as you choose.) This provides a wonderful opportunity to survey students on their feelings about various school or local government issues, some of which might be designed with the understanding that results will be reported (perhaps by students) to local government officials. While faculty/staff can decide on the questions, teachers can also have students determine these questions based on local issues that matter most to them. Topics should be phrased as a statement that will be answered on the same scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.
8. Teachers who choose to allow the student body to determine some of the issue-based questions at this point in the lesson should explain to the class that issue based questions are typically based on debatable topics, and that they can be specific to their school, to their city, countywide, or - if teachers choose - statewide or national current events. Have students first consider what they might like to explore in the form of questions (even though final questions will eventually be transitioned to statements as described above.) Some sample questions include:
 - Should our school implement mandatory uniforms?
 - Should our county increase the salary supplement for public school teachers?
 - Should our community require all police officers to wear body cameras?
9. Let students that there are several issue-based questions that will appear on their ballot that voters around the state will answer, but it is up to them to brainstorm and then decide additional schoolwide/local issue based questions that students will also answer. Tapping into any issues being debated at the school and/or local level and creating a question around such issues or controversies allows students to weigh in and provides an excellent opportunity for students to then present the results to local governing bodies and officials (ideas for which are described later in the lesson.)
10. When thinking of an issue-based question, students can also be instructed to consider which topics interest them the most and will be most relevant to their particular school and/or community. Perhaps they are passionate about the environment, job creation and economic growth, health care and social welfare, public education, or something else. Tell students to consider what challenges they notice throughout the school and/or community. Which policies might improve quality of life for you or your family and friends?
11. Explain to students that there are three steps to creating an issue-based question:
 - Brainstorm broad topics of interest.

- Brainstorm specific policies or questions related to that topic. (For example, if your broad topic is the environment, more specific areas might include carbon taxes, coal ash spills, or city green space.)
- Write your question. The question should be free of spelling and grammatical errors and should be phrased in such a way that students can choose between two different answers.

➤ **Teacher note:** Teachers should ensure students don't create a question that matches the issue-based questions automatically included on the First Vote ballot.

12. Teachers can have students complete this process individually, in partners, or in groups. Once all questions have been collected, teachers should have the class vote on the most interesting question(s). Options include:

- Collect all questions and write each final question on a piece of chart paper. (Ideally, combine questions that are similar.) The next time class meets, have all of the questions posted around the room. Provide all students with two stickers or Post-Its. Instruct them to vote on the best two questions.
- Collect all questions and type them all onto a handout. Provide the handout to all students the next time class meets and have them circle their top two choices.
- If multiple classes conduct this activity, each top question from each class can then be combined onto a handout that is distributed to all participating classes to vote on the final question.
- Once the final questions are determined, they will need to be transitioned to statements that can be answered by selecting Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Analyzing the Results

➤ **Teacher Note:** Carolina K-12's lesson [The Results Are In](#), while written for the 2016 elections, may still be useful in leading students in reflecting about their experience voting in the local election simulation, as well as discussing the **results** of the election, the **exit poll data**, and the **issue-based questions**. It also provides ideas for students to share various aspects of these results publically (i.e., writing a press release or a blog post.)

13. Sample post-election discussion questions might include:

- How would you characterize the overall voter turnout for the First Vote simulation at our school? How does our school compare to other schools in our area? Across North Carolina?
 - Based on whether there are similarities or differences that are evident, allow students to project why this might be the case. For instance, if one particular school's turnout skyrocketed over all others, is it possible they chose compulsory voting?
 - Again, ensure that any projections students make regarding differences in results are done so with evidence and respect.
- How did our school's First Vote results compare to the actual local election results? What various factors might account for the similarities/divergence between the results?
- Which grade level in our school had the highest turnout? Classes that implemented the "[Get Out the Vote](#)" lesson should further analyze what impact their strategies may have had:
 - Why do you think more ___ graders voted?
 - What effect did your Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaigns have on grade turnout? Do you think turnout would have been the same, higher, or lower with or without a GOTV campaign? Explain.
- Did students in certain demographic groups (sex, race, grade level) vote at higher rates than other groups? What do you think accounts for these results?
- Did one grade/gender/race vote overwhelmingly for one party/candidate or the other? Why do you think this is the case?
- According to the data, were people who had parents who voted at home more likely to vote? Why do you think this is the case?

- Discuss with students that many studies have shown that youth whose parents/guardians vote typically also vote and get involved in politics: "...Young people are more likely to vote and otherwise get involved in politics if they have seen their parents do so. Any public campaign designed to promote the political engagement of young people must not neglect the home as an institution in which youth learn to be engaged." (Source: [*Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It*](#) by Stephen Macedo)
- What party would most students in your school be registered as? Why do you think this is the case? What determines a young person's party affiliation?
 - Share with students that a 2005 Gallup survey found that parents are the most determining factor in a young person's political views: "Are the great generation-splitting debates that were characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s -- about everything from politics and religion to drugs and hair -- splitting today's generations? Not if the results of a new Gallup Youth Survey*, which asked teens to compare their social and political views with those of their parents, are any indication. While a fifth of U.S. teens (21%) say they are "more liberal" than their parents and 7% say "more conservative," 7 in 10 teens (71%) say their social and political ideology is about the same as mom and dad's. (Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/14515/teens-stay-true-parents-political-perspectives.aspx>.)
 - In your opinion, is this idea correct, that many teens are actually influenced by their parent's ideology? Why or why not?
- Which of the issue-based questions interests you the most and why? (Meaning, which topic addressed areas you most care about?) How do you feel about the way the answers to that question turned out?
 - Teachers should take time to dig into as many of the issue-based question results as class time and student interest permits. Many of these questions deal with deep and critical issues that can spawn an entirely new lesson plan for further/deeper exploration.
- How did our school's answers to the various statewide issue-based questions compare to other schools? What various factors might account for the similarities/divergence between the results?
 - Remember to ensure that any projections students make regarding differences in results are done so with evidence and respect.
- Do the results overall lean towards one party or ideology (in either or both of the election results and/or the issue-based questions?) Why do you think this is the case?
- Do you see any outliers in the results (candidates elected, exit poll data, and/or issue-based questions) that surprises you, confuses you, merits further discussion, etc.?

Presenting Results to Local Government Officials

14. While a more time intensive project, an excellent way to engage students with their local government is to have them prepare a presentation to share with local government officials. Teachers who choose to implement this project should explain to students that in connection with the First Vote local elections simulation, they will begin working on a project in which they prepare a presentation to local government bodies or local government officials. This can either involve inviting an official(s) to class, or students attending a meeting of the governing body. Presentations might be based on:
 - the issue-based questions data collected during the First Vote simulation
 - the importance of voting in local elections in general (i.e., presenting ideas or advice on how local government officials can better engage youth)
 - issues students are concerned about locally
15. Teachers should consider and determine what parameters to provide for the content possibilities of student presentations, and provide class time for students to explore and brainstorm the presentation's purpose and focus. While developing and scheduling a presentation (either at a local government meeting, or by having local government officials visit the classroom) can be time consuming, it can be monumental in a student's interest in and connection to the importance of local government. Projects such as this also encourage critical thinking, develop collaboration, and hone presentation skills.

16. A generic assignment sheet for presenting to a local governing body or official is attached. Teachers are encouraged to edit and adapt this information based on what and how each class will present. While it is recommended each group present their work to class, teachers may need to facilitate a process in which the best presentations (both content and presenters) are chosen and refined to be presented to local government officials. When students present in front of their classmates, students should create the following chart to fill out as they listen to each presentation:

Presenting Group Members	What was the group's identified issue needing improvement, and what important facts did they share the issue?	In what ways did they attempt to persuade officials to positively impact the community by addressing this issue?	What was the strongest aspect of this presentation?	What could be improved about this presentation?

17. The teacher may choose to hold a class vote for the best presentation, or have students vote on various pieces from various presentations to be refined and compiled into a new presentation, to then actually be shared with local government officials. There are many possibilities that teachers will want to consider and then decide what is best for each particular class.

- EXAMPLE: Students vote on what particular points/issues (based on all that was shared in class) are most important to share with local officials, as well as vote on who they would like to present the proposal. The teacher would then need to meet with the group selected to be final presenters to refine the final presentation. The remainder of class should still be involved and given updates regarding the process once the final presentation is under preparation. When the small group has completed and practiced the final presentation, it should again be piloted in front of the entire class for final comments.
- If only a small group of students will be presenting, the class as a whole can still participate in other ways, such as:
 - Attending the meeting: If the official is visiting class, all students will listen and be allowed to ask questions; if presenting at a board meeting, all students should attend.
 - Write a letter of support to the local body/officials (using the attached business letter format.)
 - Contact local media (papers, news stations, radio stations, etc.) to tell them about the upcoming presentation.
 - Circulate a petition.
 - While written for reporting on the 2016 general election results, Carolina K-12's lesson [The Results Are In](#) provides several ideas that can be modified for use with this activity, including information for having students create a Press Release, Blog Post, or Infographic.
- Another option is to invite multiple local government officials to your school, and have each of them listen to several group's presentations. This option will allow all students to present their final work.

12. Regardless of the method chosen, after students have presented to the actual local government officials, all students can be instructed to follow-up by sending a letter regarding the presentation made and reviewing specific actions or recommendations. (Again, see the attached Business Letter format.)

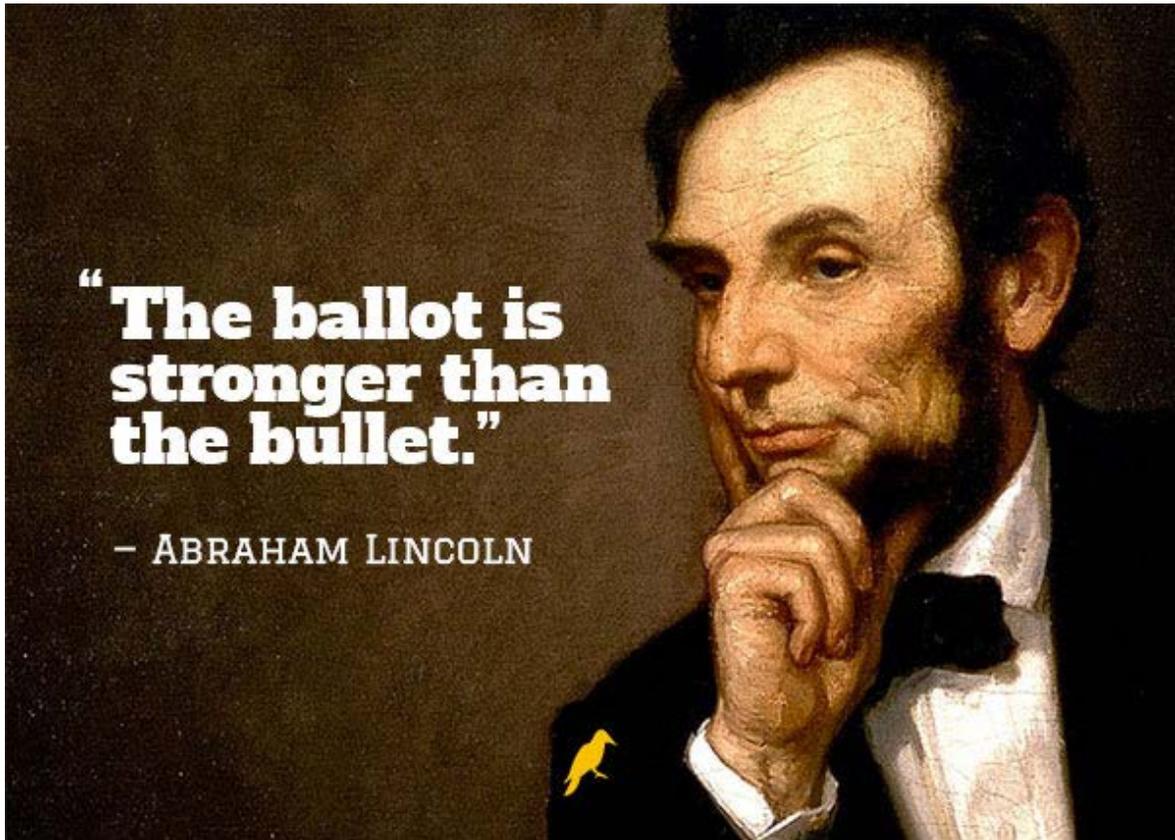
IF YOU DON'T

VOTE

YOU LOSE
THE RIGHT TO
COMPLAIN

**JUST BECAUSE YOU DO
NOT TAKE AN INTEREST IN
POLITICS, DOESN'T MEAN
POLITICS WON'T TAKE AN
INTEREST IN YOU.**

—Pericles



“The ballot is stronger than the bullet.”

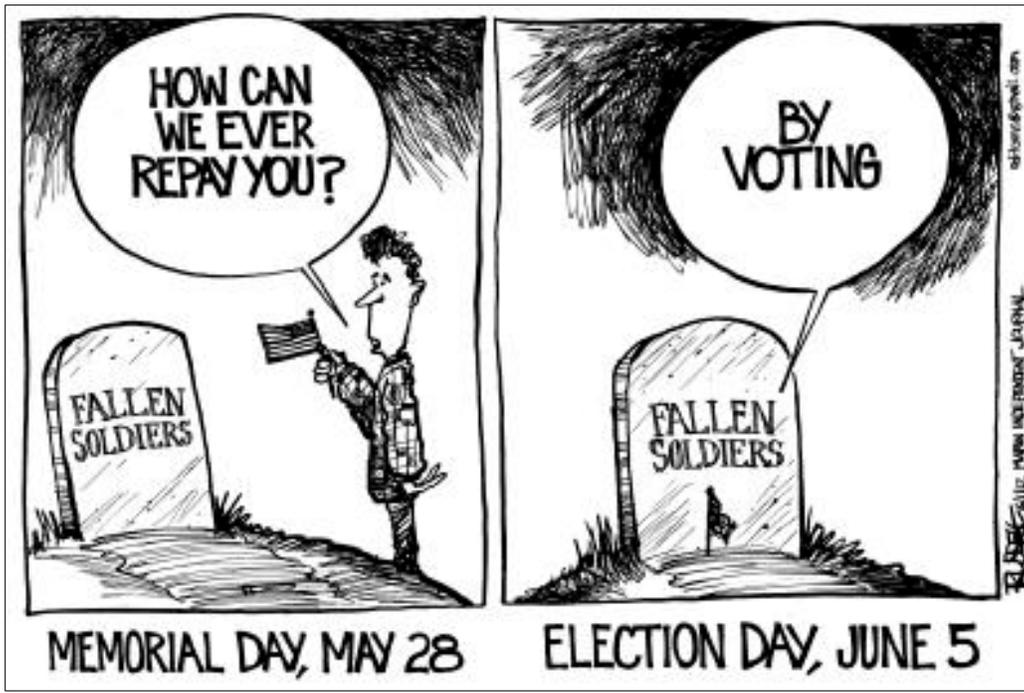
– ABRAHAM LINCOLN



And so we shall have to do more than register and more than vote; we shall have to create leaders who embody virtues we can respect, who have moral and ethical principles we can applaud with enthusiasm.

(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

izquotes.com



IF VOTING DIDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING

WE'D STILL HAVE:

NO WOMEN'S RIGHTS,
NO PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
NO 40-HOUR WORK WEEK,
NO CIVIL RIGHTS ACT,
NO SOCIAL SECURITY,
NO MEDICARE AND MEDICAID,
NO FOOD ASSISTANCE,
NO MINIMUM WAGE,
NO WORKERS COMPENSATION,
NO ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS,

Name: _____ Group Members: _____

Preparing a Presentation for Local Government Officials

Based on your acquired understanding of local government and its impact on each of us, you will identify a community issue that you are interested in or have concerns about that you share with an identified local government official, such as city council, school board, etc. You will work in groups to prepare and deliver an informative, engaging, and persuasive presentation with the goal of convincing local government officials to commit to improving your identified issue and/or approving your request. Each group will deliver their presentation to the class.



Selected Issue:

Local government official(s) responsible:

Step I: Research

Due Date: _____

1. Research the **local government officials** who have the power to address your identified issue and prepare an overview of each member's background, views, affiliations, etc. (For example, if the issue is one city council can impact, start is on the City Council's homepage, where bios and information about each person are generally listed. Which of the members may be most interested in your presentation? Are any backed by local groups whose mission is in line with the content of your presentation? Which Council member might present the most opposition to your presentation and why? Given each Councilmember's background, how does the presentation need to be tailored to each of them to receive their interest and approval?) You will report back to your group members regarding this important information.

Group member(s) responsible: _____

2. Research the **local government's priorities, mission, vision, etc.** and see if the subject matter of your presentation is mentioned in any way, or if any goal can be related to the content of your presentation. Many local governing bodies have retreats in which they set particular goals to accomplish for the town, county, school district, etc. Also, **research issues the local governing officials have addressed in the past** that relate to your presentation by reviewing previous meeting minutes, searching the Internet and media outlets, calling local government agencies, etc. Administrative officials can often help with research like this (such as town or county clerks.) By uncovering any previous conversations related to your presentation's subject matter, you can possibly build upon or link your petition to an issue already discussed.

Group member(s) responsible: _____

3. Research **local issues** that pertain to the subject matter you have chosen for your presentation. Try and find specific data or statistics from your city, county, and adjacent areas that can be related to your presentation. If you have data from an issue-based question that appeared on the First Vote election simulation, consider how you can utilize and convey this information. (For example, if your presentation is about getting City Council to reduce carbon emissions, calculate the carbon footprint of several of the main buildings in town to determine what the major sources of pollution are.) Prepare a summary to present to your group regarding other local related issues.

Group member(s) responsible: _____

4. Research **statewide issues** that pertain to the subject matter you have chosen for your presentation. How are other cities, counties, school districts, etc. dealing with the issue you've identified in your own community? (For instance, are any other towns making choices you'd like your city to mimic? How does North Carolina compare to other states? What is your school board doing/not doing to address your identified issue?) Prepare a summary to present to your group.

Group member(s) responsible: _____

Step II: Compile your research into a presentation transcript

Each of you will present your research and summary to your group members. Then, it is time to prepare your presentation by discussing everything you feel you need to say to convince local government officials to support your presentation. After everyone has presented their information and discussed, as a group, compile your work into a **5 minute presentation**:

5. Brainstorm: As a group, create a list of all the major points you think are important to share in your presentation. Consider as you brainstorm:
- What do they need to know about your topic in general?
 - What do they need to know about your topic's affect/possible affect on our community?
 - In what ways can the city/county/school improve its environment, its economy, its image, its quality of life, its image, and/or its health, etc. by addressing your topic?
 - What do they need to hear to be convinced to support your concern?
6. Your presentation's transcript should contain an **introduction**, a **detailed body**, and a **conclusion**. Keep in mind that while your passion for your chosen subject matter may be the foundation of your presentation, remember that local governments are primarily running a business. Thus, it is important to develop a presentation that not only educates and inspires, but also highlights how supporting your petition for change makes sense from a business perspective.

Introduction:

- Explain who you are.
- Thank the governing body or official(s) for hearing you
- Give an overview of the identified problem and what you are requesting

Presentation Body with Details:

- Explain the negative effect or possible negative effect of your identified issue in more detail.
- Explain the various options the local government has for improving this issue; explain how these choices can improve the issue at hand

Conclusion

- Review the ways local government can take action regarding your identified issue and why this will be beneficial to the city
- Review the possible consequences if action is not taken
- Thank the official(s) for their time and offer to answer any questions.

7. As a group, write out what you want to say given the above format to create a **first draft**. Read the draft out loud among your group and discuss how to make the presentation concise and effective. Are there ways you can infuse passionate persuasion and salesmanship? Have you included appropriate evidence? Does this make sense from a business standpoint? Continue to rework what you have written to make the presentation something the officials will realistically consider.

Step III: Prepare a Memo, Visual Aids, and/or Letter to the Council

Your teacher will work with students to get signed up to present at the appropriate council or board meeting, and/or to arrange for the appropriate local government official(s) to come to your school. In preparation for the presentation, your teacher might have you:

- Based on the focus of your presentation, prepare a **visual aid** that can help your audience see the importance of supporting your presentation.
- **Draft a letter** to be sent to officials before your presentation, explaining what you will be discussing with them and encouraging their support. This letter should be in standard business format.

Step IV: Presentation

Each group will first present their presentation to the entire class, as if your classmates are the local government officials. Classmates will also be permitted to ask follow-up questions. **The due date of class presentations is _____.**

At the end of all of the presentations, everyone will vote on the most effective presentations, or will elect to compile various pieces of various presentations in to one master presentation. **This actual presentation will be presented to officials on _____.**

8. Determine who will present. It is recommended that you choose 1-2 presenters. Consider who is most comfortable speaking publicly, who can answer questions in “the hot seat”, and who has the greatest passion for this project. Although only 1-2 group members will actually do the talking, the remainder of the group will be responsible for coaching presenters before the presentation, offering support at the presentation, and assisting in answering follow-up questions.
9. Once you have decided on who will actually present, the entire group must help prepare that person. Before your class presentation, presenters should:
 - **Warm Up:** It’s normal to be nervous before your presentation. Breathe deeply, stretch and say a few nursery rhymes or speak the words to a favorite song to get your voice warmed up. To keep your throat from drying out while presenting, drink a glass of water and/or bring a water bottle with you.
 - **Practice:** Stand in front of your group members and go through the presentation. Group members will then offer positive feedback and note areas for improvement.
 - **Be aware of your body language:** Maintain good posture, and refrain from shifting back and forth or making nervous, repetitive motions.
 - **Facial expression and eye contact:** Rather than keeping your head down and reading from a paper, use eye contact when possible. Let officials see the care and concern in your eyes.
 - **Speaking style:** Use appropriate volume, speak clearly, and talk with convincing conviction. Persuade your audience effectively by using transition words to help your presentation flow. Take a breath when needed, rather than using “um” or repeating yourself. If appropriate, you may wish to spice up your content with analogies, comparisons, or even a small amount of humor. Pause and take appropriate time rather than rushing.
 - **Answer questions:** Listen attentively to questions asked, pausing to consider them, and respond appropriately. Communication is the key to a successful presentation.
 - **Be considerate:** In the beginning of your presentation, introduce yourself and thank officials for allowing you to address them. At the end, thank them sincerely for their time and attention. Address officials with the appropriate salutation (i.e., Councilmember, Sir, Madam, Chairman, etc.)
 - **Know when to stop:** Don't bore your audience with repetitious or unnecessary comments. End your presentation appropriately by summarizing your main points and thanking your audience. Leave your listeners with a positive impression and a sense of completion.
10. As a group, consider the follow-up questions local government officials may ask of you, as well as what types of opposition you could possibly face. Have a prepared response to address the skeptics.

How to Write a Business Letter for Policy Change

2600 Rock Quarry Road
Raleigh, NC 27610

January 13, 2007

Mayor Cynthia Jackson
Cardinal City Mayor's Office
3600 Tarheel Road
Cardinal City, NC 27609

Dear Mayor Jackson:

The first sentence should state your reason for writing. If your letter calls for a policy change, the related policy should be mentioned in the first sentence; if your letter proposes a new policy or action, make your intention clear from the start. The next statements address your concerns and relate specific examples. Your last sentence will say something like, "For these reasons, I am proposing a new policy that mandates..." or "For this reason, I encourage City Council to..."

The following 1-3 paragraphs will include your suggestion(s) and reasoning. Here you will state every possible option for addressing your concern and correcting the problem or absence of policy. You should write a separate paragraph for each suggestion/point. This component requires specifics: Who will be impacted? Who will be responsible for carrying out the change? Who will provide funding if necessary? How will the change be monitored? What will be the lasting impact?

Your next-to-last paragraph offers your recommendation to the City Council. You set forth the best and most reasonable option, state why it emerges as most reasonable, why it proves most beneficial for all parties involved, and why it points to lasting results. Specificity and an emphatic tone demand your attention.

The last paragraph summarizes all of the above. Identify your initial purpose and ultimate goal. Briefly review the options presented and strongly assert your recommendation. Always thank your reader for his/her time and consideration of your proposal. Mention you look forward to hearing from them in the near future and provide your contact information.

Sincerely,

**You sign your name here.

Jose Smith