

....youth voter registration and  
education project

Our educational programming is designed to inspire a more informed and active generation of young people. At FairVote, we believe that every student should have an opportunity to register to vote and learn about how they can participate in the political process before they leave high school. Learning Democracy is an interactive curriculum that engages students and prepares them for a life of political activity.

"The Way Democracy Will Be"  
[www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org)

VOTE



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# LEARNING DEMOCRACY



....a student's guide to voting



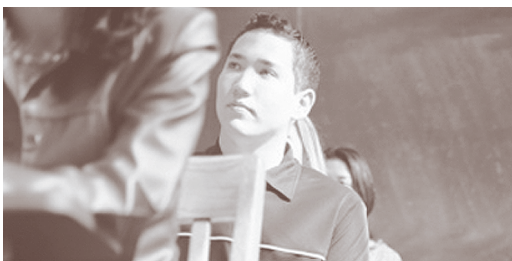
"The Way Democracy Will Be"

# DEMOCRACY

FairVote is committed to the highest standards of educational programming and professionalism. Our volunteers and staff are trained in both teaching our voting curriculum and interacting with high school students. We appreciate you giving us this opportunity to be a guest in your classroom.

## Voting and Democracy Curriculum Introduction

FairVote's voting curriculum, *Learning Democracy*, is designed to supplement traditional high school civics programs by teaching students the mechanics of participating in democracy. Through an innovative multimedia presentation, *Learning Democracy* gives students concrete examples of how and why they should increase their level of civic engagement. The curriculum has three components: the history of voting rights, the mechanics of voting and ideas for action. Through images, music and peer-to-peer interaction, *Learning Democracy* will inform and entertain high school students.



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## Our Peer-to-Peer Model

*Learning Democracy* is a peer-to-peer curriculum, where college or graduate students will facilitate the program in high schools. This educational model encourages students to interact with their classmates and promotes a nontraditional classroom atmosphere. Peer-to-peer programming has the potential to inspire lively discussion and engage students in a different way than conventional civics classes.

## CURRICULUM COMPONENT 1:

### History of Voting Rights

*Learning Democracy* takes students on a historical journey through the evolution of suffrage in the United States and provides a snapshot of democracy around the world. In order for students to understand *why* people vote, they need to know *how* our current state of suffrage came to be in the United States. Learning about international political systems provides students with a frame of reference to consider why voting matters to so many people.

## CURRICULUM COMPONENT 2:

### Mechanics of Voting

A typical high school civics curriculum effectively teaches the foundational elements of democracy. Studying institutions, how laws are made and political parties gives students a solid base that prepares them for a future of active citizenship. What can be missing, however, is a lesson about the basic mechanics of voting like "how to vote" and "what to expect on Election Day." Students should feel comfortable going into their polling place for the first time and should not be intimidated by the process. In addition, first-time voters need a basic tutorial about how to request an absentee ballot and change their address or party affiliation. *Learning Democracy* makes the mechanics of voting more accessible to young people.

## CURRICULUM COMPONENT 3:

### Redefining Political Participation

While most people think of voting, attending political rallies or volunteering for a campaign as "political participation," today's students have a whole new definition.\* Large majorities of students view activities like wearing a wristband in support of a cause or wearing a t-shirt expressing a political or social opinion as "political" action. While these passive forms of expression are important, we have to be sure to explain why more active forms of political participation are still necessary in a participatory democracy. *Learning Democracy* not only includes sections on the history of democracy and the mechanics of voting, but it also provides real life examples of how young people (even if they're not old enough to vote) can make a difference in the political process. Through case studies and ideas for action, *Learning Democracy* is a primer for students interested in getting involved but not sure where to begin.

## For more information, contact:

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Based in Takoma Park, MD, FairVote is a leading national non-partisan, non-profit pro-democracy organization. We pursue an innovative, solution-oriented agenda that focuses on systemic change and increasing political participation.

\*Redefining Political Attitudes and Activism: A Poll by  
Harvard's Institute of Politics-November 16, 2005