

# A Toolkit for Educating and Engaging Youth in Our Communities

*Fall 2022*



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## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most common questions we get as the State Youth Committee is, “How do we engage youth?” We have always had several examples of great programming local Leagues are doing, but they were never in one place that was easily accessible for all local Leagues to use as inspiration or replicate for themselves. After contacting local Leagues and having discussions at the 2022 Regional Trainings, we wanted created a youth-focused toolkit to make those great programs easily accessible to local Leagues. Thus, the Youth Programming Toolkit was born.

While not comprehensive of all local League youth programming, the toolkit contains 10 examples from around New York of local League programming, four PowerPoint Presentations, and example materials for engaging and educating youth in voter registration from the LWV of Rochester Metro. Programming examples include a wide-range of program types for levels ranging from primary school to college. Some of the major goals of the programs include strategies to give local Leagues more visibility in school communities; however, the State Youth Committee is cognizant that it has become increasingly difficult to get into schools since the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, we tried to provide examples that do not require local Leagues to go into schools but can still effectively engage youth. All the programming exemplifies the some of the best examples local Leagues have to offer.

Please use these examples of other programming around New York in part or wholly. Reach out to any of the contacts for additional information. If you have additional questions or would like to provide a program description for a future toolkit, please email the Youth Committee Co-Chairs, Crystal Joseph and Nick Doran. Crystal can be reached at [campus@lwnyc.org](mailto:campus@lwnyc.org) and Nick can be reached at [ndoran33@gmail.com](mailto:ndoran33@gmail.com).

Thank you to the State Youth Committee for putting this together with a special thanks to:

- Betty Ann King, LWV of the North Country
- Deb Cosher, LWV of Huntington
- Megan Nettleton, LWV of Tompkins County
- Jane Hatterer, LWV of NYC
- Susan Ferris Rights, LWV of North East Westchester
- Lindsey Houlihan, LWV of Scarsdale

## **CITIZENSHIP AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM**

**League:** LWV of the North Country

**Contact:** Suzy Johnson

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**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Civic Education and Advocacy

**Description of the Program:** The LWV of the North Country collaborated with Champlain Valley Educational Services to offer an all-day symposium for area high school students: Citizenship and Political Activism in NYS. The symposium gathered local and state elected officials (city mayor, town supervisor, county legislator, NYS Senator, NYS Assemblymember, and a school board member) to discuss the structures of our various types of governments and to encourage active participation in governmental decision-making. The LWV discussed the importance of voting and voter registration. The Board of Elections commissioners discussed how and why to become involved in the electoral process and that every vote counts. During lunch, all the speakers continued their conversations by rotating among small groups of the student-delegates. The student delegates were able to ask questions at the end of each session.

### **Goals:**

- To encourage voter registration and citizen engagement in their lives.
- To show students that democracy works best when its citizens are engaged and participate.

## **FIRST VOTE**

**League:** LWV of Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties

**Contact:** Margie McIntosh

**Contact email:** reelitteer@roadrunner.com

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Voter registration, voter education, civic education, advocacy

**Description of the Program:** We reached out to 29 local high schools in late spring of 2018 and concentrated our efforts on schools interested in collaborating with us. More than 25 committed community volunteers have attended annual trainings and visited schools to do voter registration. Our success in the beginning did and still depends upon the unique relationship between one co-chair and school personnel as well as the large volunteer network by the other co-chair. As of 2022, we are now a known entity and our calls are expected. With Covid restrictions on campus visits, we stayed connected with follow up communications each semester since Spring 2020 with voter tips, updates, and other resources. We have a similar program with all five of our local colleges and universities.

### **Goals:**

- Establish awareness of LWVCA and permission to visit each high school to assist in voter registration efforts.
- Raise registration rates and awareness/participation.
- Make a serious subject interactive and interesting.
- Offer collaborative efforts with classrooms and teachers.

**HOUSE OF KICKS**

**League:** Albany

**Contact:** Mary Berry

**Grade level:** High school, college

**Purpose:** Voter registration

**Description of program:** House of Kicks is an annual sneaker sale held in the Albany area. The LWV of Albany trained youth to do voter registration at the event. With youth leading the charge and the League providing the resources, the youth were registering and interacting with other youth and more likely to discuss voter registration.

**Goals:**

- Increase voter registration and pre-registration.

## **PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT**

**League:** Rochester Metro Area

**Contact:** Judy Sternberg

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**Grade level:** High School

**Purpose:** Voter registration/Voter Education/Civic Education

**Description of program:** This 40- minute program includes 1) 20 minutes of interactive discussion about voting and not voting, 2) a game to bring home the consequences of giving up one's vote, 3) plus 20 minutes for guidance in voter registration. The program has evolved to include a more diverse presenter team, including men and persons of color. Our two person teams include a team leader who is an LWV-RMA member and a community member.

### **Goals:**

- Increase student engagement and excitement.

## **RUNNING AND WINNING**

**League:** LWV Huntington, NY

**Contact:** Deborah Cosher

**Contact email:** dcosher@optonline.net

**Grade level:** High School

**Purpose:** Civic Education, Advocacy

**Description of program:** A full day event, 8:30am- 2:30pm, for high school junior and senior girls. Invite a 6 elected women officials or past officials to speak to the high school girls on why they ran for office, the obstacles they faced, and the successes they have had. We have had county legislators, town councilwomen, town clerks and judges participate. After hearing from the officials there is a breakout session with one official, two league members and a small group of girls 6-8 at each table. The girls ask the officials more questions, and then work on a mock candidate. Each table then presents their candidate to the entire group. The students create a job description, resume, platform, a logo, a hashtag, Instagram account, press release, and short speech for their candidate. The League provides breakfast and lunch.

### **Goals:**

- Encourage young women to take an active interest in government and politics.
- Encourage young women to take an active role in civic issues.
- Show the students career options.
- Confidence building.



## **SPECIAL ELECTION**

**League:** LWV of Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties

**Contact:** Margie McIntosh

**Contact email:** reelitteer@roadrunner.com

**Grade level:** Primary and middle school

**Purpose:** Voter education

**Description of program:** At specific voter registration events, we hold a special election to draw people to our table, mostly children, but parents come along! For instance, at the local YMCA, we had a “Best Green Vegetable” election, with paper ballots, including an opportunity for a write in candidate. The ballots were cast and a “Kids vote too” sticker was given out. Each venue was sent a poster with the results.

### **Goals:**

- Introduce concept of voting
- Acquire voting related vocabulary

## **STUDENT DAY AT THE SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**League:** LWV Huntington, NY

**Contact:** Deborah Cosher

**Contact email:** dcosher@optonline.net

**Grade level:** High School

**Purpose:** Civic Education

**Description of program:** Suffolk County LWV and the Suffolk County Legislature jointly sponsor the program. They invite several high schools to participate by selecting six to eight students from their school who are interested in a full day “behind the scenes” educational experience into the inner workings of our local government. The day consists of a welcome from the Presiding Officer, hearing from several legislators, breakup sessions of small groups to learn “How a Bill Becomes a Law,” “How Ideas Become Resolutions,” etc. This is followed by a Mock Legislative Session.

### **Goals:**

- Understanding local legislature.
- Learning the value of community meetings.
- Legislators come from all backgrounds, are citizens just like us, and are approachable.
- Realization that nothing can stop you from becoming a future legislature.

**TEACH ME TO VOTE**

**League:** LWV of Saratoga

**Contact:** Deb Peck Kelleher

**Contact email:** lazykatespins@outlook.com

**Grade level:** Primary school, middle school

**Purpose:** Voter education

**Description of program:** A video targeted to fifth grade students and designed specifically for the last election. It is just six minutes long but talks about the importance of voting and the ballot proposals. The link to the video is: <https://www.lwvsaratoga.org/teachmetovote2021>.

**Goals:**

- Teach the students the history and importance of voting.
- Promote a discussion on current ballot proposals.

## **VOTE 18**

**League:** LWV Huntington, NY

**Contact:** Deborah Cosher

**Contact email:** dcosher@optonline.net

**Grade level:** High School Juniors and Seniors

**Purpose:** Voter registration, voter education, civic education

**Description of program:** Vote 18 is an interactive voting lesson run by a LWV facilitator. They lead the students through the two hundred years plus journey of the history of voting from our country's inception to the present. Next the students conduct a debate and hold a mock election to promote a discussion of current events and timely issues. The students are then taught how to fill out a voter registration form and the eligible students are registered. The program requires three to four league members to participate.

### **Goals:**

- Teach the students the history and importance of voting.
- Promote a discussion on events and issues that resonate with young people to get them excited and involved in their future.
- Engage them and promote civic participation.
- Initiate a conversation with social study teacher or government club teacher to have the LWV back to teach seniors how to register their classmates at a school registration drive.
- Offer certificate of appreciation to students that participate.

## YOUTH CORPS

**League:** Westchester ILO

**Contact:** Kathy Meany

**Contact email:** kzmeany@gmail.com

**Grade level:** High school, college

**Purpose:** Voter registration, voter education, civic education, advocacy

**Description of program:** The League of Women Voters of Westchester Youth Corps encourages youth, as our leaders of tomorrow, to become active and informed participants in government and to ensure that young adult voices are heard. We encourage all students, ages 16-23, to be part of the Corps. In 2020, LWVW piloted a Youth Corps comprised of 20 high school and college students, and is currently in the process of expanding the Corps as students transition out of the program. Students were actively involved in voter registration drives; assisted at poll locations by guiding the elderly and disabled to designated voter lines and distributing water and snacks to those waiting in long lines; developed GOTV videos for distribution; and launched the Youth Corps' Instagram GOTV messaging.

### Goals:

- Network and coordinate more closely with identified high school administrators and teachers from Running & Winning, Students Inside Albany, and local League Voter Service committees to encourage potential Youth Corps and League membership.
- Provide resources for all 100 County high schools for pre-registration of 16- and 17-year-olds, early voter registration, and media literacy.
- Partner with local college student organizations on voter registration and providing access to informative materials.
- Continue collaboration with the State Youth Committee and with State League Youth Coordinators to engage students in League programs by developing a database of local youth programs and volunteer groups.
- Streamline membership process and integration into local and county league activities for youth members. Encourage those that attend Running & Winning, and Students Inside Albany to join their local leagues as student membership is free.
- Youth Corps to boost social media messaging on important and emerging issues.
- Join other LWVW committees: County Government; Environment; and Voter Service.
- In collaboration with the Yonkers School Board District, LWVW to develop and pilot an experiential learning journey to further reinforce County students who completed their civics readiness education and received their Seal of Civic Readiness (Note: The Civics Readiness Initiative was piloted across New York State high schools in 2021-22, with ten Westchester County schools participating. For 2022-23, all state schools are eligible to participate and must apply to do so.)

**APPENDIX A: POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS**

Below are examples of PowerPoints presentations provided by local Leagues. The example presentations are adaptive for a variety of either grade school or higher education communities. Any local League leader can use the presentations as a template to use fully or adapt to meet the needs of their league to educate their general youth audience and/or satisfy advocacy needs. PowerPoints are located on the LWVNYS website.

***Hard Fought! Hard Won! Vote!***

**League:** LWV of Chautauqua County

**Contact:** Mary Croxton

**Contact email:** [mcroxton51@gmail.com](mailto:mcroxton51@gmail.com)

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Voter registration and education

**Description of PowerPoint:** LWV of Chautauqua County sponsored a civics program for high schoolers in October 2021. The program, which was presented to government classes at the City of Dunkirk High School in Chautauqua County, is entitled “Hard Fought! Hard Won! Vote!” The PowerPoint presentation provides an overview and timeline respecting the expansion (and obstruction) of voting rights in America. The presentation relies upon several sources, especially citations from the work of Learning for Justice. The presentation included voter registration materials and the League’s offer to deliver students’ completed registration forms by the registration deadline for voting in the November 2021 elections. In addition, the presentation included information on SIA and offered free student memberships to the LWV.

**Goals:**

- Educate youth on the history of voting rights.
- Voter registration.

***Gun Ownership Continuum***

**League:** LWV of Buffalo/Niagara

**Contact:** Barbara Gunderson

**Contact email:** [gunderbarb@yahoo.com](mailto:gunderbarb@yahoo.com)

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Civic education

**Description of PowerPoint:**

This is a list of points of view on gun ownership, from least restrictive to most restrictive. It is intended for use with the power point, How to Vote, described below. It is a warm-up activity intended to demonstrate to students that many points of view on any issue are in any group. I've used it as separate sheets posted across a classroom and had students line up in front of the one they agree with. However, since Covid, students can't be that close together, so I present them, have them jot down the one they agree most with, and talk with someone near them about why they agree with that statement.

**Goals:** Help make students aware that many points of view exist on a single issue.

***The Ballot and the Government***

**League:** LWV of Buffalo/Niagara

**Contact:** Barbara Gunderson

**Contact email:** [gunderbarb@yahoo.com](mailto:gunderbarb@yahoo.com)

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Civic education

**Description of PowerPoint:** This power point presentation serves as both a review of how government works at the federal, state, and local level and as a preview of offices on the ballot in 2022 at each level. I plan to update it annually. It can be used in conjunction with voter registration and pre-registration.

**Goals:** Review student understanding of branches and levels of government and introduce them to which candidates are the ballot in their locality at each level.

***How to Vote***

**League:** LWV of Buffalo/Niagara

**Contact:** Barbara Gunderson

**Contact email:** [gunderbarb@yahoo.com](mailto:gunderbarb@yahoo.com)

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Voter education

**Description of PowerPoint:** This power point is designed to introduce students to issues-based voting. It presents "how to vote," starting with registration and identification of issues about which students are passionate. Then it discusses how to research candidates' perspectives on those issues in order to determine how to vote for candidates who support the issues students

care about. It is used in conjunction with student voter registration and pre-registration, and is prefaced by use of the Gun Ownership Continuum, described above, as a warm-up activity.

**Goals:** Help students realize that voting is a way to change what they believe needs to be changed and/or preserve what they want to preserve in our society, and encourage active involvement in the voting process.

***Making Your Voice Heard By Voting***

**League:** LWV of Utica/Rome Metropolitan Area

**Contact:** Dianne Dimeo

**Contact email:** [dianne.dimeo@icloud.com](mailto:dianne.dimeo@icloud.com)

**Grade level:** High school

**Purpose:** Voter Education for High School Seniors

**Description of PowerPoint:** This Powerpoint was used in high schools during the fall of 2022 to educate the seniors about the history of voting rights, how to register to vote, and how to actually vote. The reasons for voting and importance of one's vote is also included.

**Goals:** To educate the seniors about the history of voting rights and to instruct them how to register, vote and find information about the election (Vote411.org)



