YOUTH VOTER INCLUSION GUIDE

10 Non-Partisan Strategies for High Schools to Increase Youth Voting

1. Identify Students Eligible to Vote on Election Day.

- The most important step your school can take to help increase youth turnout is to determine which students at your school will be eligible to vote on Election Day.
- For administrators, this means pulling a **list of students born on OR before the date of the next election**. These students will be at least 18 years old, and eligible to vote.
- Once you have your list of eligible student voters, we've outlined several **formal** and **informal** options for reaching out to these students in the strategies below.

2. Send a Letter Home to Eligible Student Voters & Families

- One of the easiest formal steps is to **send a letter home** (either distributed during classes, or mailed/emailed home) reminding eligible students and their families that they are encouraged to vote on Election Day.
- This letter should also **outline any strategies** your school will implement as part of your voter turnout strategy, so students/families anticipate them in the coming weeks.

3. Offer Voter Registration during Class Time (If applicable in your state)

- Registration deadlines vary nationwide, so this may or may not be applicable in your state. Many states also have requirements about who can register voters and when.
- If your school is allowed to register students to vote, and the registration deadline has not passed, consider offering eligible students a **final opportunity to register to vote** during their **English or Social Studies Classes** on a day prior to the Election.

4. Hold a Virtual or In-Person School Assembly for Eligible Students

- If your school would rather talk to all eligible voters at once, send your list to faculty and ask them to dismiss students for a morning/afternoon assembly exclusively for eligible voters. If possible, invite a local election official to talk about voting.
- At the Assembly, discuss any additional strategies your school will be using to increase voter turnout, and let students speak to their peers about why voting matters.

5. Set a School Goal Voter Turnout and/or District-wide Turnout Competition

- Once you know the number of eligible student voters at your school, your administration or Student Government can **set a turnout goal for your school**. Since 25-40% of young voters usually turnout for elections, you can set a goal of 75% that's still far above the national average (but we encourage you to go higher!)
- Create **incentives for reaching your turnout goal** (i.e. free pizza day, dress-down days, faculty dunk tank, principal has to dye hair, etc.)
- If other high schools in your district set turnout goals, **host a competition** with the winning school getting a trophy/award to showcase until the next election/competition.

6. Peer-to-Peer Non-Partisan GOTV Week by YMCA Youth and Government

- The week prior to the Election, have the **YMCA Youth and Government** delegation at your school **host a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) Week**.
- Using the **list of eligible student voters** at your school, they'll divide up the list of names and make sure they talk to every eligible voter at the school one-on-one during the week. During their GOTV conversations, they will:
  - Ask their peers to vote, and talk to them about increasing youth voter turnout
  - Help peers identify their polling place and plan what time they'll be voting
  - Once they've met with a peer, they will mark them as completed on the list.

7. Ensure Sample Ballots are posted in Common Spaces and/or Classrooms

- In conjunction with posting flyers reminding students to vote, schools should also **post sample ballots** (ask local election officials) **in common spaces and classrooms** so students can review the different offices and candidates they'll be able to choose from.
- Remember to only use **official non-partisan sample ballots**, and avoid partisan voter guides that are often available from campaigns, parties, and interest groups.

8. Require Athletics/Extracurriculars to Excuse Students from Practice/Meetings

- A common excuse for student voters is that voting **conflicts with afterschool sports or extracurricular activities** that often require attendance at meetings or practices.
- School Administration should require all athletic and extracurricular activities to notify their participants that **practice/meetings on Election Day are not required** and are **officially excused** by the school to ensure they have time to vote.

9. Celebrate Election Day

- Make sure that Election Day at your school is a **celebratory atmosphere**, ensuring that all students – not just those who are eligible to vote – know it is Election Day.
- Consider engaging Extracurricular Organizations like YMCA Youth and Government to **decorate hallways** the night before Election Day, or **host a mock election** for students who aren't yet eligible to vote.
- For a school-wide celebration, consider hosting a **non-partisan #VoteTogether Event** on campus during lunch or immediately after school (as eligible students leave to head to the polls).

10. Ensure Opportunities for Student Voting on Election Day

- Ultimately, the best way to ensure that your eligible student voters turn out to vote is to create **as many opportunities** to vote as possible.
- While there are many ways schools can proactively promote student voter turnout, here are a few of the most effective:
  - **Election Day Early Dismissal:** Give eligible students a half-day off to vote, with early dismissal to allow for time to get the polls.
  - **Rides to the Polls:** Reserve a bus or other transportation to drive students to polling locations during the day. This can take some time with multiple polling locations, but can make it a fun trip for students to vote together.
  - **Student Vote Pass:** Allow students to arrive late or leave early with a "Vote Pass" they can secure on Election Day from the school office.