

Engaging America's Youth through High School Voter Registration Programs

By Jody Herman

and Lauren Forbes

Have you ever gone to a high school and stood in the background and watched these high school students run a voter registration drive? It is very encouraging and motivating...You cannot help to be proud of what they are doing on their own. You not only see, but also feel, a sense of democracy at work.

- State Official, Office of the Secretary of State, Arizona

Introduction

High school voter registration programs, a national trend with broad support, are an effective means of increasing electoral participation among young people.¹ To address low turnout among youth, a number of states, counties, and cities across the country have adopted laws, administrative rules, and mandates to increase youth participation through high school voter registration programs.²

To assess the degree to which high school voter registration programs have been encouraged or implemented at state or municipal levels, Project Vote contacted state officials and education administrators, inviting them to participate in a survey. Data from this survey come from all 50 states and have allowed Project Vote to examine where programs exist, how they were created, and how they are being implemented.³

Furthermore, through analysis of this survey data, Project Vote was able to identify best practices for high school voter registration programs, barriers to implementing such programs, and solutions to problems encountered in various jurisdictions.

In this report, we will review current data on youth participation in elections and the potential impact high school voter registration programs could have if implemented across the United States. Then, we will discuss the methods and limitations of the survey research Project Vote conducted to assess programs being implemented across the country. We present the survey findings by providing state-level data, analysis of the program content, and a brief discussion of commonly reported barriers to implementing these types of programs. Finally, we conclude with an in-depth look at best practices for programs.

Current Data on Youth Electoral Participation

Youth in the United States are underrepresented in the registered and voting electorate. As of November 2008, U.S. citizens 18- to 29-years old were registered to vote at a rate 10 percentage points lower than the general voting-eligible population.⁴ In the 2008 general election, U.S. citizens aged 18 to 29 turned out to vote at a rate 13 percentage points lower than the general voting-eligible population. When one looks at 18-year-olds alone, registration and

voting rates are even lower as compared to the general voting-eligible population. In November 2008, the registration rate for 18-years olds was 22 percentage points lower, and the voting rate was 21 percentage points lower.

The impact of high school voter registration programs could be substantial in improving youth electoral participation. High school voter registration programs could increase 18-year-olds' overall registration rate and improve youth participation in elections. There are an estimated 3.8 million 18-year-old citizens in the United States. If registered at the same rate as the general U.S. population (71%), there would have been more than 830,000 additional 18-year-old registered voters as of November 2008.

In the state of Florida, county-level Supervisors of Elections have deemed current student voter registration and education programs in their counties "tremendously effective" in increasing voter registration and turnout.⁵ This report will shed further light on how high school voter registration programs can be very successful in engaging the youth electorate and improving participation.

Methods

Over a four month period, from April through July 2010, Project Vote collected responses to an original online survey designed to collect information on high school voter registration programs in the states. Questions on the survey asked respondents whether a program was in place in their jurisdiction, why the program

was established, and how the program is being implemented. The survey asked respondents to provide estimates of the cost of their program and how many registrations were completed in the program. Finally, the survey asked respondents to discuss the most and least effective aspects of the programs they administer. (For the full survey, see Appendix 2.)

The survey was an online instrument that respondents accessed via a link. An email announcement containing the survey link was sent to every state's secretary of state and each state's Board or Department of Education. The email also asked recipients to forward the survey link to those who would be the most appropriate to respond about high school voter registration programs in their state. Project Vote also contacted those to whom state-level officials referred us through their survey responses. Finally, Project Vote followed-up with phone calls to ensure responses were collected from each state. A link to the survey was also posted on Project Vote's website, where respondents were directed as a means to access the survey in addition to the email link.

Project Vote collected 181 responses to the survey. After eliminating responses that were either incomplete or from respondents outside the survey's target population (such as students seeking information on voter registration), a total of 137 respondents were included in the final analysis. Respondents came from all 50 states and reported on a total of 86 voter registration programs being implemented across the country. Fifty-six percent of respondents were state-level

officials from offices of the secretary of state, state Boards or Departments of Education, and state Boards of Elections. Forty-two percent of respondents were from local jurisdictions, such as county supervisors of elections, county registrars, school board members, school administrators, and teachers.

The main limitation of the survey is that Project Vote was not able to independently verify information provided by survey respondents. The findings presented in this report, therefore, are solely based on the beliefs and opinions of the survey respondents themselves. Project Vote believes that the officials, administrators, and teachers who implement these programs are uniquely situated to provide valuable insight on the creation, implementation, and efficacy of these programs.

Findings

High school voter registration programs are being implemented at various jurisdictional levels and in a variety of ways across the country. Table 1 below describes who the survey respondents were, shows which states were reported to have a program in place, and provides the basis upon which the programs were implemented.

Respondents from 38 states (78%) reported that a high school voter registration program is in place in their jurisdiction.⁶ Programs in 16 states (33%) were based in state law. Statutory requirements vary across the states, which results in a

complex picture of what is required for program content and who is responsible for implementation. For instance, state laws can specify many aspects of a program, but only in nine cases did the survey respondent report that state law places a requirement upon high schools to participate. In five states, respondents reported that state law placed a requirement upon local election officials to participate in or conduct a high school voter registration program, but high schools were not required by statute to participate.

Other reasons respondents reported for creating a program include county or city law, school board or district policy, or voluntary initiative. Programs in 26 states (53%) were created due to a voluntary initiative, which is by far the most common reason for a program to be created. A program in one state was created due to county or city law, and programs in three states were based on school board or school district policy.

The survey sought to find out how students were being offered voter registration, such as through simply having forms available in the school's office or by being offered in the classroom during civics lessons. We also inquired about the various ways in which programs were educating students on voter registration and participation in elections. Programs reported in the survey ranged from those that simply make voter registration forms available to students in the school's office to those that incorporate intensive voter education programs, which included student poll worker recruitment, voting machine demonstrations, and mock elections.

Table 2 below shows how reported programs in the states are being implemented and if they include any kind of voter education component. The most commonly reported implementation strategy is to make voter registration applications available to students, often by having them available in the school's guidance office or another administrative office. This implementation strategy was utilized by programs in 27 states (55%). Respondents in some states reported that students are offered voter registration during classroom time (43%) (such as during civics class), or during a school assembly (24%).

Respondents in 26 states (53%) reported that their programs include one or more voter education components. Programs in 18 states (37%) provided voter education for students in the classroom, such as through a special presentation by a local election official. Programs in the same number of states provided voter education through use of an information table at the school, such as where students could stop by to speak with election officials about voter registration. Programs in 10 states (20%) provided voter education during a school assembly. Respondents reported other voter education activities and methods in programs in nine states (18%). These other voter education efforts included such practices as direct mailing materials to students, online education programs, and special programs and events, such as voting "Vote with a Vet" and "Civics Day."

Table 1
Survey Respondents, Presence of High School Voter Registration Programs, Program Basis, and Participation Requirements by State

State	Number of Survey Responses		High School VR Program	Program Created Was Based On...				High School Participation Required?
	State-level Officials	County, City, or School-level		State Law	County/ City Law	School Board/ District Policy	Voluntary Initiative	
AL	2	-	Y	X	-	-	X	Y
AK	1	1	Y	-	-	-	X	N
AZ	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
AR	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
CA	2	1	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
CO	1	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
CT	1	-	Y	X	-	-	-	***
DE	1	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
DC	2	-	Y	-	X	-	-	N
FL	0	5	Y	X	-	-	X	***
GA	1	-	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
HI	3	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
ID	1	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
IL	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
IN	1	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
IA	1	2	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
KS	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
KY	2	-	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
LA	2	-	Y	-	-	X	-	Y
ME	1	-	Y	X	-	-	-	N
MD	1	7	Y	-	-	X	X	**
MA	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
MI	1	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
MN	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
MS	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
MO	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
MT	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
NE	2	5	Y	-	-	-	X	N

Table 1 continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Table I
 Survey Respondents, Presence of High School Voter Registration Programs, Program Basis,
 and Participation Requirements by State

State	Number of Survey Responses		High School VR Program	Program Created Was Based On...				High School Participation Required?
	State-level Officials	County, City, or School-level		State Law	County/ City Law	School Board/ District Policy	Voluntary Initiative	
NV	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
NH	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
NJ	1	2	Y	-	-	-	X	N
NM	2	14	Y	-	-	X	X	N
NY	2	1	Y	X	-	-	X	N
NC	2	-	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
OH	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
OK	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
OR	2	-	Y	X	-	-	-	Y
PA	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
RI	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
SC	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
SD	2	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
TN	2	-	Y	X	-	-	-	***
TX	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
UT	2	-	Y	X	-	-	X	Y
VT	1	-	Y	-	-	-	X	N
VA	1	8	Y	X	-	-	X	***
WA	3	1	Y	-	-	-	X	N
WV	1	-	Y	X	-	-	-	***
WI	2	10	Y	X	-	-	X	Y
WY	2	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	80	57	Y = 38	16	1	3	26	Y=10
	58%	42%	78%	33%	2%	6%	53%	20%

Note: The state of North Dakota does not have voter registration and, therefore, is not included in this table.

** Programs in some local jurisdictions are required to be implemented in all high schools by School Board/School District policy.

*** Requirement to provide high school voter registration rests with local election officials.

Table 2:
Implementation Practices and Voter Education Efforts for High School Voter Registration Programs in the States

State	How is the Program Implemented?			Does Program Include Voter Education?			
	VR Forms Made Available	VR Offered in Classroom	VR Offered During Assembly	During Class Time	During an Assembly	Information Table	Other
AL	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
AK	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	-
AZ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AR	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
CA	Y	-	-	Y	Y	Y	-
CO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DC	-	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-
FL	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
GA	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-
HI	-	Y	Y	-	-	-	-
ID	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IA	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-
KS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
KY	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
LA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
ME	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y
MD	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-
MA	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
MI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-
MO	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y
MT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-

Table 2 continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Table 2:
Implementation Practices and Voter Education Efforts for High School Voter Registration Programs in the States

State	How is the Program Implemented?			Does Program Include Voter Education?			
	VR Forms Made Available	VR Offered in Classroom	VR Offered During Assembly	During Class Time	During an Assembly	Information Table	Other
NV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NH	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NJ	Y	Y	-	Y	-	-	-
NM	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
NY	-	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
NC	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-
OH	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
OK	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
OR	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
PA	-	-	-	-	-	-	Y
RI	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SC	Y	-	-	-	-	Y	Y
SD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TN	-	-	Y	-	-	Y	-
TX	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UT	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
VT	Y	-	-	-	-	-	-
VA	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
WA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
WV	Y	Y	-	Y	-	Y	-
WI	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	-
WY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	27	21	12	18	10	18	9
	55%	43%	24%	37%	20%	37%	18%

Note: The state of North Dakota does not have voter registration and, therefore, is not included in this table.

Funding, Costs, and Impact

The survey sought to assess sources of funding for programs, costs to implement the programs, and the impact on numbers of student voter registrations. Out of the 86 programs represented in the survey, sixteen respondents (19%) reported that their programs were funded (in whole or in part) by state funds.⁷ Twenty-five programs (29%) were supported with county or city funds. Seven programs (8%) were provided support from charitable organizations and/or third party non-profit organizations, such as the League of Women Voters. Sixteen programs (19%) were supported by a combination of funding sources or other public funding, such as school district funds.

Unfortunately, very few respondents were able to provide an estimated overall cost in dollars for their programs. However, among election officials, the most common reported expense was the cost of the voter registration forms themselves. Other reported costs include postage to mail forms, some personnel costs, and costs for educational materials. Very few respondents were able to provide numbers of voter registrations that resulted from the programs, so an analysis of these data is not provided.

Barriers to Implementing High School Voter Registration Programs

The survey asked respondents to describe any barriers they believe exist to implementing a high school voter registration program in their jurisdiction. The most common barrier expressed by respondents was funding and resources for the program. Time was another common barrier mentioned by respondents. Respondents cited a lack of time that staff would have to implement the program, the lack of time in the school day or school year to conduct a program due to tight scheduling of classes and classroom time, and a lack of time on the part of students who have demanding schedules both during and after school.

Respondents also identified lack of interest on the part of officials, school administrators, and students as a primary barrier to implementing these programs. Since many programs are conducted without any statutory requirement or other mandate to do so, it takes interest and will on the part of officials and administrators to implement such a program. However, one respondent suggested that if a lack of interest can be overcome, no barriers truly exist. This respondent, a Montgomery County, Maryland school official, stated, "There really are no real barriers that exist if a school wants to run a successful program, especially if their local Board of Elections is as good as ours!"

Best Practices for Implementing Effective High School Voter Registration Programs

Survey respondents discussed what aspects of their programs they believed were the most effective and least effective in registering students to vote. The following is a compilation of best practices and tips that respondents recommended for implementing successful high school voter registration programs:⁸

Establish partnerships among election officials, school administrators, and community organizations

Consider stake holders at all levels. State schools chiefs, county school district superintendents, educators, local election officials, and student and community organizations all have a stake in high school voter registration programs. Convene a group that will plan and implement an effective voter registration program. Including student leaders in the initial discussion is essential, as students are influenced by their peers. Coordinating community organizations, especially ones that already run voter registration programs, to implement district-wide efforts is a successful approach taken in **Virginia**. Election officials in **Georgia** found it helpful to get high school principals involved, keeping them up to date on voter registration requirements or initiatives.

Reach out to schools and communicate

often. Once a plan for high school outreach is in place, communicate often. Officials in **Vermont** have found that communicating with high schools directly via email, mailings, and social networking sites, such as Facebook, has been very effective in promoting voter registration program participation. Additionally, Vermont officials have partnered with student councils, sports teams, and clubs to create positive peer pressure that encourages students to register to vote.

Utilize online resources. In **California**, the secretary of state's office offered an alternative to voter registration cards by encouraging high schools to add a link called "MyVote" to their school's website, which gives students and staff access to voter registration forms 24 hours a day. Linking voter registration to high schools' homepages makes registering quick and accessible. **Georgia** has dedicated a student-oriented website to voter registration.

Conduct in-person outreach. State officials in **Connecticut, Florida, and Nebraska** have recognized that a physical presence in high schools to conduct voter registration programs is essential. That way, officials are able to field questions about the registration process and aid students in completing their registration forms. In **Virginia**, school administrators partnered with election officials to create a friendly voter registration competition among schools, which was successful.

Actively involve students and teachers

Establish peer-to-peer programs. One way to encourage student voter registration is to establish a student registrar or student poll worker program. In **Maryland** and **Nebraska**, student registrars are trained and certified to run voter registration programs in the high schools they attend. The **District of Columbia** has started a youth poll worker program. In survey responses from many states, election officials reported that when students are allowed to run a voter education and/or registration program within their school, they believe it increases the number of students who register to vote.

Let the students craft the plan. Allowing students to design voter registration programs allows them to think creatively and feel involved in the program. In **Arizona**, election officials found that students prefer to run their own voter registration programs instead of having election officials “run the show.” They immensely enjoy involvement and are exceptional at motivating their classmates. Officials in the Arizona secretary of state’s office observe and learn from student-crafted programs. They are able to mimic what works when implementing programs at other schools. Arizona officials have found that students can be very creative with ideas about conducting well-organized voter registration drives.

Connect voter registration programs with other events. In **Maryland**, the state Board

of Education runs a program to train student registrars during National Student Leadership Week, which culminates in the election of the Student Member of the Board of Education (SMOB). This election uses actual election equipment with certification by the Board of Elections, and students are taught how they have a real impact when they exercise their civic rights.

Conduct classroom visits. Partnerships between election officials and teachers of government classes are often very efficacious. In **Virginia**, for government teachers who were willing to partner with county registrars, allowing the registrars time to talk to students in their classroom was very effective in producing student voter registrations.

Convene a student advisory board. Designating of students from each county school to serve on a student advisory board, which helps to organize and coordinate voter registration drives, is a practice that has seen great results and has served as a medium for information-sharing between schools and counties in **Florida**.

Include a voter education component

Familiarize students with the voting process. Voter registration targeted at students gets more people to participate in government not only because it stresses the importance of registering, but also because it educates people on the process of voting. In **Ohio**, the Grads



Engaging America's Youth through High School Voter Registration Programs

Vote program highlights the process of absentee voting and provides information on serving as a poll worker. Officials in **Nebraska** have found that involving schools' civics instructors was effective. This way, students are provided with background before they register to vote.

Partner with non-profit organizations to focus on voter education early. Teaching citizenship and multicultural civic education from kindergarten on up can be more effective than waiting until high school to educate youth on the various aspects and responsibilities of citizenship. In **New York**, non-profit organizations, such as the League of Women Voters, walk students through the voting process on real voting machines and explain the absentee ballot system. In **California**, participants in 4-H Clubs learn about citizenship from an early age. The program structure allows only youth to vote in club decisions. By the time students are old enough to vote, they are prepared to register and vote.

Carefully prepare presentations and pitches for classrooms and assemblies. In **Florida**, engaging students with a 30-minute video before walking them through completion of the voter registration form step-by-step proved to be an effective presentation technique used by state election officials. Ensuring that students can relate to the presentation, perhaps by adding an emotional pitch, will have better results. In **South Carolina**, live voter registration demonstrations at school events successfully engaged students in the voter registration process.

Provide students with information about local and state races, explaining how the issues relate to them. Officials in **New York** and **Nebraska** stressed the importance of educating students on the races that will impact them on the local or state level. They believe that when students know the value of voting and how they can have an influence on political leaders by voting and communicating with their elected officials, they are more likely to be politically engaged for life.

Don't forget the technical details. Educate the students on the appropriate laws and regulations that cover voter registration and related "Dos" and "Don'ts." While some of the technical information can be detailed, officials in **Arizona** have found that students are very quick to comprehend the requirements necessary for voter registration activities.

Tailor the message to your state's election laws. In states that have Election Day Registration, like **Wisconsin**, making students aware of the upcoming election and communicating the ease with which voting occurs, as well as informing them that they can register before or on Election Day, has proven successful. Notifying students that they may pre-register while they are 16 or 17 has proven effective in states that allow pre-registration, like **West Virginia**.

Take a respectful approach when working with students. **Arizona** officials found that election officials who address students in a respectful manner and treat them as if they were peers are most effective in engaging students.



Engaging America's Youth through High School Voter Registration Programs

Notifying the appropriate school coordinator or faculty member of the students' successful participation serves as positive reinforcement that their initiatives were noticed and appreciated.

Enact innovative voter registration programs

Think inside and outside the classroom.

Making voter registration part of the required curriculum worked in many states, including **Virginia, Iowa, and Arkansas**. The curriculum might involve bringing in the local registrar to supervise students completing the registration forms. Making voter registration part of the required curriculum in **Prince William County, Virginia** enabled students to complete registration forms in class under the supervision of personnel from the registrar's office. **New York's** Participation in Government (PIG) course stresses the legal obligations of citizenship and provides students the opportunity to interact with elected officials on local, state, and national policy issues.

Make effective use of media. The **Louisiana** secretary of state buys an advertisement in a magazine that all public and private school students receive during their senior year. This advertisement includes the official voter registration card. The student can take out the card, complete it, and send it to the local registrar's office, or send it to the office of the secretary of state.

Hold mock elections. Mock elections are a great way to introduce the concept of voting to young people. In **California**, during mock elections, students are encouraged to register to vote at tabling events staffed by their peers, which appears to be an effective approach.

Get the word out online. In **Georgia**, state officials found that using electronic delivery of materials was most effective in reaching all intended recipients.

Hold assemblies. In **Maryland** and **Louisiana**, school assemblies dedicated to voter registration produced high levels of registration. At assemblies, local registrars have the opportunity to present information to students and demonstrate voting machines.

Use pre-filled forms where online voter registration is not available. For states that offer online voter registration, be sure to target youth, as youth use the Internet more than any other demographic group. When online voter registration is not available, consider directly mailing students voter registration forms that are pre-filled with the students' information. In **Washington**, officials found that sending direct mail to students' homes when they turned 18 was effective. When tested against a direct mailing of a postcard with information to register online, they found that the pre-filled voter registration form was most the most effective way to get students to register to vote.

“Celebrate” voter registration. Encourage schools to think about the most effective ways to connect important landmark age or special event celebrations. This might be done by involving registration at graduation ceremonies, as many schools do in **New Mexico** and **Vermont**, or by distributing voter registration cards to students in recognition of their 18th birthday.

Think about the best, and least expensive, approach. In **California**, mailing 2.5 million voter registration forms to over 2,000 high schools proved to be an inefficient use of time and resources. California's secretary of state changed focus and proactively contacted high schools in California to inquire if they needed additional voter registration cards. This inquiry significantly cut costs to the state because voter registration cards were not wasted on schools that were not going to be able to utilize them.

Conclusion

Youth are underrepresented in the registered and voting electorate in the United States. To increase civic participation among young people, election and education officials are finding ways to register high school students, taking a variety of informed and creative approaches. Establishing partnerships, actively involving students and teachers, including a civic education component, and enacting innovative voter registration programs are strategies that Project Vote's survey respondents recommend for implementing successful high school voter registration programs.

States that utilize these practices have registered many young voters, effectively engaging the youth population in the democratic process.

Notes

- ¹ For an example of research on the impact of high school voter registration programs, see Michael McDonald, *Voter Preregistration Programs*, available at http://elections.gmu.edu/Preregistration_Report.pdf.
- ² For instance, The National Association of Secretaries of State is working to promote civic participation among America's youth through its New Millennium Project.
- ³ The state of North Dakota is the only state in the U.S. that does not have voter registration, though cities can implement voter registration systems. For more information, see <http://www.nd.gov/sos/forms/pdf/votereg.pdf>.
- ⁴ Data in this section of the report come from Project Vote's analysis of the November 2008 Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement, unless otherwise noted.
- ⁵ FL Division of Elections, *Voter Education Programs Report for the 2008 Election Cycle*, p. 14.
- ⁶ The state of North Dakota has been removed from the denominator for purposes of this analysis because it does not require voter registration. For more information, see <http://www.nd.gov/sos/forms/pdf/votereg.pdf>.
- ⁷ The survey did not collect enough information to assess statutory requirements and patterns of dunging to meet those requirements.
- ⁸ These recommendations are solely based on what aspects of high school voter registration programs our survey respondents believed to be the most effective in registering students to vote and engaging them in the electoral process. While a few jurisdictions did provide an estimate of how many students had registered through their program, data collected were not adequate to create a measure of performance based on the number of registrations a program generated.

Appendix I

*Additional Notes on State-Level High School Voter Registration Programs**

ST	Notes	ST	Notes
AL	State law requires that forms are available in high schools, and schools can design and implement their own programs.	MT	No information on implementation practices provided.
AZ	High schools are encouraged to design and implement student-led programs. Programs across the state use a variety of implementation practices.	NE	A variety of programs are run at the county-level in Nebraska, with differing provisions.
CA	The secretary of state's office works to provide high schools throughout the state with voter registration forms and encourages the use of a link to an online form. VR programs are implemented at the local level.	NJ	Programs are implemented at the local level, with differing implementation practices.
CT	State law requires local election officials to implement the program.	NM	The secretary of state and school administrators participate in voluntary programs throughout the state, with differing implementation practices.
FL	State law requires local election officials to implement the program. Other voter education includes use of educational videos and being available to answer questions.	NY	The state law provides for inclusion of voter registration education in civics curricula, but schools do not have to include that content in their courses. Programs are implemented at the local level with varying implementation practices.
GA	High schools can decide how to implement some aspects of the program. Civics Day is held each October and Voter Registration Month is held each April. Individual high schools may offer education components in addition to those marked.	NC	The state requires that voter registration forms must be made available to students eligible to register to vote. School districts may design and implement their own programs.
HI	No information collected on voter education component.	OH	The secretary of state's office sends to each high school packets for students that include letters from state officials and voter registration forms. The office participates in voter education efforts in high schools throughout the state.
IA	Programs vary by school. Voter education components also vary.	OR	Schools must have voter registration forms available to students and link to voter registration form posted on the school website. Curricula must cover the right to vote.
KY	No information collected on voter education component.	PA	The Department of State sends letters to high schools encouraging them to make voter registration forms available. The state also conducts the "Vote with a Vet" program, which includes voter education programming.
LA	Voter registration cards are distributed in a magazine that all high school seniors receive.	RI	The secretary of state's office conducts voluntary programs with schools throughout the state. Implementation practices vary.
ME	High schools will be sent voter registration forms and educational materials, if they request it. Schools can design their own voter registration programs.	SC	The state election commission provides schools with voter registration information, forms, and posters. They also provide voter registration drives upon request.
MD	A variety of programs are run at the county-level in Maryland, with differing provisions.	SD	No information on implementation practices provided.
MA	Programs are implemented at the local level.		
MN	No information on implementation practices provided.		
MO	Literature and voter registration cards are mailed to high schools along with letter from governor and secretary of state. Each senior receives a voter registration card.		



Continued from previous page

Appendix I Table:
Additional Notes on State-Level High School Voter Registration Programs*

ST	Notes
TN	State law requires local election officials to implement the program. County elections officials visit high schools to register students.
UT	State law requires that each high school student who turns 18 is sent a voter registration form. Other programs are implemented voluntarily.
VT	Programs are designed and implemented locally, with varying implementation practices.
VA	State law requires local election officials to implement the program. The program design is at the discretion of the local election official. Districts also design and implement their own programs, with varying provisions.
WA	The secretary of state’s office runs voluntary programs throughout the state. Other education includes direct mail to students homes, statewide voter pamphlet (info and art contest for teens), state wide online mock election, free online elections curriculum, and teacher training seminars.
WV	County clerks are to provide an opportunity to register at each high school in their county each year.
WI	All high schools are required by state law to use high schools for registration for enrolled students and members of high school staff. Schools are also required to have a municipal or state-certified Special Registration Deputy available in each high school during regular business hours.

*All information included in this table is solely based on information provided by survey respondents.

Appendix 2

High School Voter Registration Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take Project Vote's high school voter registration survey!

Purpose of the Survey

In our ongoing efforts to encourage civic participation by America's youth, Project Vote is currently researching voter registration programs in high schools. We are interested in assessing the degree to which high school voter registration programs have been implemented, encouraged, or otherwise instituted at the city, county, or state levels. We would also like to obtain information about which policies, practices, or procedures have been most effective in promoting civic engagement and participation among youth. We hope you will help us to gather this important information on high school voter registration programs by completing this survey. Data from the survey will be used to create a report on best practices, solutions to problems encountered in various jurisdictions, and the effectiveness of high school voter registration programs across the United States.

Survey Participant Eligibility

If you are an official in the office of the Secretary of State, an election official, a member of a school board or board of education, or a school administrator, we invite you to participate in this survey. If you are not currently involved with a high school voter registration program, you still have important information to offer and we encourage you to complete the survey.

Collection of Personal Information

You are not required to enter any information that can be used to identify you. If you choose to enter contact information in this survey, that information will not be shared outside of Project Vote. When the study is completed, all contact information will be removed from the resulting dataset and destroyed.

Goal of the Research

The goal of the research report is to consolidate and present information that will be helpful to those who are currently implementing or who desire to implement a high school voter registration program in their state, county, city, or school district.

PLEASE NOTE: This survey will ask for the following data for the 2008 -2009 school year: overall cost figures, number of students eligible to register through the program, and number of voter registrations collected through the program. You may want to have that information ready before beginning the survey. If you are not able to provide that information, that is fine. You will be directed around the questions that ask for that information.

Thank you for your participation in this important project!

Please proceed by clicking "Next" below.

1. Which of the following most accurately describes you?

- State official in the Office of the Secretary of State
- State-level election official
- County-level election official
- Town/City-level election official
- Board of Education/School Board member
- School administrator
- Not listed above (please specify)

Note:

The survey presented here is a visual reproduction of the online survey and, therefore, does not indicate where respondents were automatically directed past questions that did not apply to them. For instance, respondents answering "No" to Question 3 were automatically skipped to Question 25.



High School Voter Registration Survey

2. What is your official title?

3. Does your board/office oversee, manage, conduct, or otherwise provide support to a high school voter registration program?

Yes

No

4. Please enter in the box below the city, county, and/or state of the high school voter registration program you represent in this survey:

5. Are high schools in your jurisdiction/district required to implement a high school voter registration program?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

6. Was your program implemented based on any of the following:

State law

County or City law

School board decision

School district policy

Voluntary initiative

I do not have information on how the program was created

Not listed above (please specify)

High School Voter Registration Survey

7. Which selection below best describes how many schools participate in the high school voter registration program?

- One individual high school
- All high schools in one school district
- All high schools in one town, city, or county
- All high schools in the state
- I do not have information on how many schools participate in the program
- Not listed above (please specify)

8. How often is the high school voter registration program administered?

- Once per school year
- Once per school semester
- Once per month
- Runs continually throughout the year
- I do not have information on how often the program is administered
- Other (please specify)

9. How is the high school voter registration program implemented?

Check all that apply:

- Voter registration offered in a classroom setting
- Voter registration offered during an assembly
- Voter registration applications made available in the school's administrative office
- I do not have information on how the program is implemented in the school(s)
- Other (please specify)



High School Voter Registration Survey

10. Does your voter registration program include any of the following education components?

Check all that apply:

- Voter education at a school assembly
- Voter education during a civics class or as part of the civics curriculum
- Voter education in the classroom (not a civics class)
- Voter education at an information table in the school
- There is no education component in this program
- I do not have information on any education component of the program
- Other education component (please describe)

11. Can you provide the total number of students who were eligible to register to vote through the program during the 2008-2009 school year?

- Yes
- No

12. Please enter in the box below the total number (or estimate) of students were eligible to register through the program during the 2008-2009 school year:

**13. How is the high school voter registration program paid for?
(In other words, where do the funds for the program originate?)**

Check all that apply:

- State funds
- County or city funds
- Charitable funds (such as from a non-profit organization)
- Private funds (such as from an individual donor)
- I do not have information on how the program is paid for
- Other (please specify)



High School Voter Registration Survey

14. Does your board/office track the overall cost of the high school voter registration program?

Yes

No

15. Overall, what was the total cost of the high school voter registration program for the 2008-2009 school year?

Please enter a dollar amount in the box below:

16. What types of expenses were included in the total cost you entered above?

Check all that apply:

Voter registration forms

Personnel costs (hourly pay or salaries)

Educational materials

Other expenses (please describe)

17. Does your board/office track how many students are registered through the high school voter registration program?

Yes

No

18. How many students were registered through the high school voter registration program during the 2008-2009 school year?

Please enter a number in the box below:

19. Have surveys or audits been conducted to assess the effectiveness (in terms of cost and registrations completed) of the high school voter registration program?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

High School Voter Registration Survey

20. Please enter in the box below where and how to request a copy of the survey or audit report:

21. What aspects of your voter registration program have you found to be most effective in getting students to register to vote?

22. What aspects of your voter registration program have you found to be the least effective in getting students to register to vote?

23. What recommendations would you make to others who want to design and implement a high school voter registration program?

24. If you were unable to provide some details about the program, would you please forward the link to this survey to those who can provide those details - or - please enter their contact information in the box below?

PLEASE NOTE: Their contact information will not be shared.

25. What jurisdiction do you represent? (Please enter the name of the state, county, town/city, or school district.)

26. Would your board/office be interested in implementing a high school voter registration program in your state, county, city, or high school(s)?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)



High School Voter Registration Survey

27. What barriers have you experienced or do you believe exist in creating and implementing a high school voter registration program in your city, county, or state?

28. Do you know of any other high school voter registration programs that have been implemented in your city, county, or state?

Yes

No

29. Would you please forward the link to this survey to the groups/entities implementing the other program(s) - or - please enter their contact information in the box below?

PLEASE NOTE: Their contact information will not be shared.

30. Please add any further information or details you would like us to know about high school voter registration programs in general or your specific program:

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any documents you would like to share with us, you can email them to Estelle Rogers at erogers@projectvote.org.

31. May Project Vote contact you for any of the following reasons?

Check all that apply:

About implementing a high school voter registration program

To further discuss your survey responses

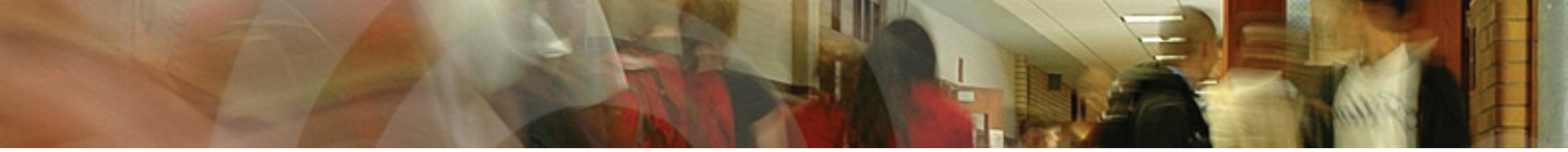
To send you a draft of the report to review before it is released

No, I do not wish to be contacted

You wish for us to contact you about:

32. Please enter your name and contact information in the box below:

PLEASE NOTE: Your contact information will not be shared.



About Project Vote

Project Vote is a national nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes voting in historically underrepresented communities. Project Vote takes a leadership role in nationwide voting rights and election administration issues, working through research, litigation, and advocacy to ensure that our constituencies can register, vote, and cast ballots that count.

Acknowledgments

Project Vote thanks all the school administrators, school board members, teachers, state, county, and city election officials, and all others who took the time to share their valuable insights with us through the survey. We also wish to thank Project Vote's legal interns Liz Shen, Michelle Rupp, and David Sophrin for their assistance on this project.

Project Vote will continue to seek out and evaluate best practices as states, counties, cities, and schools continue to create and use innovative methods to engage high school students in voter registration and electoral participation.

©2010 by Project Vote/Voting for America, Inc. This paper is covered by the Creative Commons "Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike" license (see <http://creativecommons.org/>). This work may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial use. It may also be adapted for non-commercial use. Reproduction or adaptation must attribute Project Vote/Voting for America, Inc., and must bear the Creative Commons "Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike" license. Please notify Project Vote if reproducing or adapting this work.

"Project Vote®" is a trademark of Project Vote/Voting for America, Inc. and registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The Project Vote logo is a trademark or common law mark of Project Vote/Voting for America, Inc.

December 2010