

State Elections: Grade 6 through 8



The following is a supplement to the Kids Voting *Civics Alive!* curriculum. The information and activities in this supplement are specific to the state of Arizona. Please use the grade level material in *Civics Alive!* before and while using this material.

The Arizona specific curriculum concepts and activities from previous pages have not been repeated at this level, but you may wish to refer to that section for state election ideas. Attention in this portion will be given to county specific election information. Local activities are contained in the Kids Voting local election section.

Concepts and Activities

I. What is the purpose of state government?

A. Discussion:

What does Article II, Section 2 of our state's constitution declare? ("All political power is inherent in the people, and **governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed**, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights.")

How does this statement relate to the responsibility of voting? Where does political power come from?

B. Activities:

1. Use individual vocabulary charts with terms which relate to the constitution and our responsibilities to vote. For example: inherent, political, power, consent, governed.
2. Create a timeline of the historical development of the state constitution and the amendments relating to elections that have been added.

II. What types of political boundaries divide the state of Arizona?

A. Discussion:

For what purposes are the county, legislative and congressional boundaries established? How are boundaries for each changed?

B. Activities:

1. Using the Arizona Constitution and an Arizona County division map, place dates and explanations regarding any additions and changes in county division.
2. Make a mural/timeline showing how Arizona began as a territory in 1863 indicating the four counties that were established in 1864. Add Maricopa County, which was created from Pima, Mohave and Yavapai Counties in 1871 and Pinal County, which was created from parts of Maricopa and Yavapai Counties in 1875, etc.
3. Using legislative and congressional district and precinct maps, explain how these boundaries were created and what effect they have on state and local elections.
4. Have students identify their own counties, districts, and precincts.

III. What is the purpose of county government?

A. Discussion:

What are the responsibilities of county government in Arizona? How is each county different? How are they alike? What are the elected county offices and from where do they derive their power?

B. Activities:

- Place a large county map on a bulletin board or wall or have students draw a map on the board.
1. Have each student identify his/her voting precinct within your county.
 2. Have students identify the county seat, major roads, natural features and important industries for the county.

C. Discussion:

Why are county governments important? What responsibilities do citizens have in participating in county government?

**You can obtain a county division map by visiting:
<http://www.azcounties.org>**

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D. Activities:

1. Invite candidates for the County Board of Supervisors and other elective county offices to speak to your class or school. Have students write letters to candidates or conduct personal interviews to determine where the county receives its power to operate, the basis for its laws and principles of government, and its relationship to municipalities.
2. Make a class chart defining state, county and municipal powers.
3. Investigate performance records of incumbents and promises of candidates in relation to these responsibilities.

IV. Identify county officials and the functions they perform.

A. Discussion:

- Who are the officials who run your county?
- What are their responsibilities?
- What qualifications should they have?
- Identify candidates running in this year's election.
- On what platform are they running?

B. Activities

1. Have students make charts of the various elective positions and list qualifications for office.
2. Host a candidates forum at your school to which all eligible candidates are invited to participate.
3. Have students prepare a summary sheet of county powers, duties and responsibilities.
4. Have students identify the county's methods of compensation of employees, authority to delegate powers, election and removal of members, terms of office, and the manner of filling vacancies and levying and collecting taxes.

V. What are the state, county and city offices that will be on this year's Kids Voting ballot?

A. Discussion:

- Who are the candidates and what are their qualifications?

B. Activities:

Select a number of state, county and city offices and conduct a mock student debate. Students should choose a candidate to represent, research the issues surrounding that particular office and participate as a "candidate" in the debate. The class should prepare and ask questions of the "candidates" based on current issues in the official election and the duties of the particular office. Conduct a mock election following the debate.

VI. What are the issues that will be on this year's Kids Voting ballot?

A. Discussion:

- How does an issue qualify to be on the ballot? (discuss the difference between initiative and referendum.)

B. Activity:

Make a list of the issues on this year's ballot. Have students select an issue, trace its origin, and discuss its pros and cons. Create a practice ballot and have students cast them. Report and analyze the results.

Kids Vote ONLINE at
www.kidsvotingaz.org

To look up the e-mail address or fax number for any member of the Arizona Legislature, visit:
<http://www.azleg.state.az.us/>

For an explanation of the initiative and referendum process, visit the Secretary of State's office at:
<http://www.sosaz.com>