

CIRCLE Growing Voters: K-12 Schools and Education Administrators

K-12 schools are foundational institutions that reach almost all youth. Young people want to learn about voting and elections in school and understand how to navigate information about current events because they know these things affect their lives. For millions of young people, school is the only place where they learn about elections. That's especially the case for teens of color and youth from underserved communities.

THE FACTS

31%

of youth who were interested in learning and talking about the 2020 election in school were not able to take a course about U.S. politics.

20%

of youth of color—higher than youth overall—rely on schools for civic learning. They don't have opportunities elsewhere in their lives.

30%

of rural youth—far lower than urban or suburban youth—have had a chance to understand the full spectrum of political ideology and to explore their own views.

The CIRCLE Growing Voters is a paradigm shift to transform how policymakers and many other stakeholders can strengthen young people's equitable engagement in democracy. Learn more, engage in this work, and share it with others at:

circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters



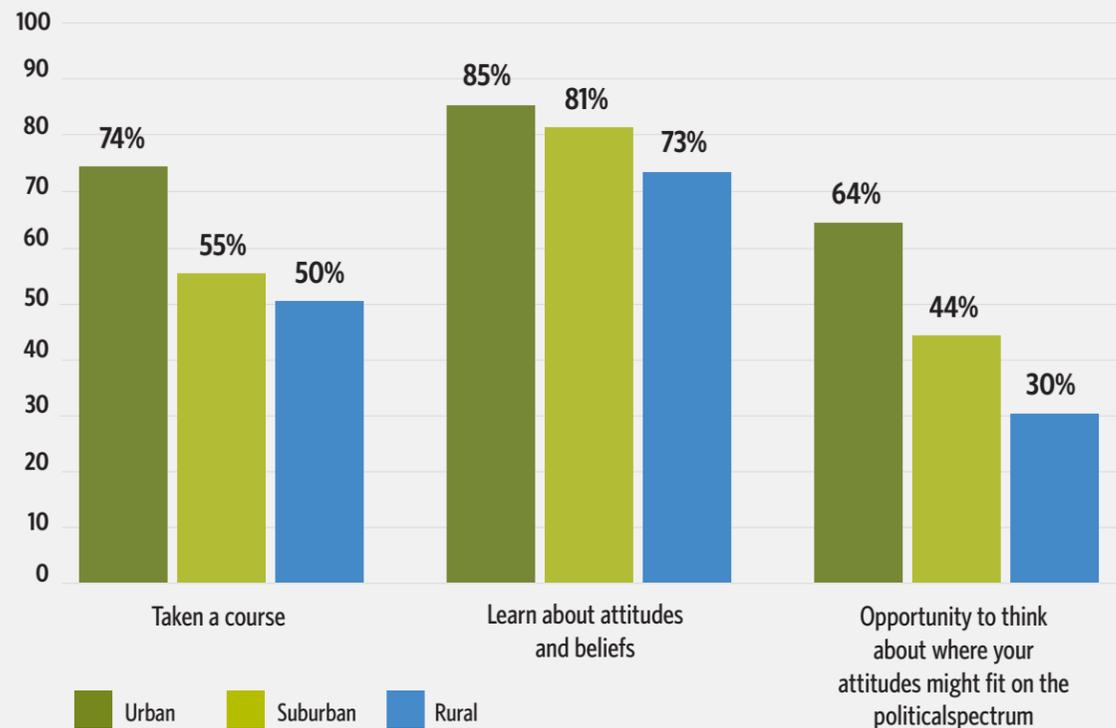
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Geographic Inequity:

Teens need and deserve a comprehensive and engaging civic education no matter where they live, but right now suburban and especially rural youth are not enjoying the same civic learning opportunities as their peers in urban areas.

CIVIC LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AMONG URBAN, SUBURBAN, AND RURAL TEENS

Teens in rural communities are much less likely than their suburban or urban peers to be learning about politics and their civic identities in school.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: HOW EDUCATORS CAN GROW VOTERS

WHAT

Don't silo civic learning; teach about elections across the curriculum

Let students register (and pre-register) to vote in school

Embrace media creation as a pedagogical tool

Expose students to extracurricular opportunities

Embrace values of equitable democracy in the classroom

Fund and facilitate youth journalism

Embrace youth leadership and voice

WHY

Students need multiple opportunities to understand how elections work and why they should participate

Not all students who are or will soon be eligible to vote have a "voting role model" in their community; for many students, school is the only place they will hear about voter registration.

Students can build skills and confidence in expressing their voice in multiple mediums while also gaining important media literacy skills.

Many young people express interest in learning about or participating in elections and local politics but have not been given the opportunity. Some young people just need to be asked or invited to participate

Students can build agency and a commitment to participate in elections by establishing their sense of belonging and engaging in rigorous civic learning and practice in school

School newspapers play an important role in helping students understand that their voices can keep leaders accountable—an important foundation for voter confidence and civic participation.

Giving young people a voice in schools is a way of creating a democratic culture that shows youth that their voices are valued

HOW

Teach disparities in voter participation using GIS, teach how to convey social messages through art, or make mock elections a schoolwide event!
Explore the [Teaching for Democracy Alliance](#) for resources

Check out [CIRCLE's Growing Voters policy scan](#) to see if your state permits pre-registration.
Non-partisan organizations like the [Civics Center](#), [My School Votes](#), and [Inspire2Vote](#) can get student leaders and educators started on running voter registration (and pre-registration) drives in schools, and you can partner with local election officials.

Increase the use of (multi-)media creation as a tool for teaching media literacy and civic skills—and to show that social media can be a valuable place for social and political engagement

Seek out and share opportunities for your students to become involved in local politics and elections, such as youth poll worker programs, youth advisory boards, or youth-adult partnerships in community efforts

Strive to create a civic learning community in which everyone belongs and contributes their valuable lived civic knowledge to discourse and learning. See the [Educating for American Democracy Roadmap](#) as a resource

Support student journalism and free speech through [school newspapers](#)

Consider forming a student voice committee, a student slot on the school board, or other ways for students to provide input and feedback on how to increase teaching about elections and voting

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