



Chalk Talk

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Subscribers,

On the eve of the January 23 federal election, I'm mindful of how in a democratic society the small miracle of casting our vote gives us the opportunity to make our voices heard. I'm struck, too, by how often eligible voters relinquish this right due to apathy or lack of informed opinion. So how, I ask, can parents and educators work together to inspire participation in the democratic process and civic responsibility in our young people?

My son, now a Grade 5 student, learned early that in our home voting is serious business. Since he was a toddler, he accompanied my husband and me to vote in every election, municipal, provincial or federal. For the first few years, "going to vote" was a mysterious tradition – not work, not play, a social but secretive ritual. A labyrinth of hallways led to standing in line with neighbours and strangers in gymnasiums divided into alphabetized zones, eventually qualifying to receive an innocuous sheet of paper which could only be read behind a private barrier. For the privilege of joining us behind the secret panel, my son knew he was to behave respectfully, observe the marking of the 'X' silently and to save his comments until we had exited the voting area.

As he grew older he began to learn about the electoral process at school. He noticed the colourful signs on front lawns that seemed to pop up overnight and began to ask questions of both his teachers and parents. Around the time of the last federal election, his class began watching news related programming and forming discussion groups. By the time this election was called, he was brimming with curiosity, often taking the opportunity to ask adults whom they intended to vote for and why, often puzzled by the variance in responses. Many lively conversations have ensued driving to and from his hockey practices, including discussion about how historical events affect elections and political parties. He looks forward with excitement to the day, just eight short years away, when **he** will get the chance to vote in his first election.

There are many ways to engage children in their citizenry. Teachers have a host of free

Learning the Electoral Process*



The [Elections Canada](#) website has resources for teachers about elections. For children between the ages of 5 to 10, the site offers, [Choosing Our Mascot](#), which helps younger students to understand the meaning of elections, voting, candidates, choosing the right candidate, etc. It also helps students to understand that **Voting is Important**. Educators can also [order](#) necessary teaching materials they may require to assist them in the classroom.

For students in grades 5 to 12, the Elections Canada website offers a [School Elections Officer Guide](#) for student council elections and an [Election Simulation](#). These resources will help teachers meet the needs of older students from ages 11 to 18.

The Guide helps students to choose their own candidates in order to better understand the Electoral Process. This guide is specifically for the person acting as the School Elections Officer and the teacher/s who are assisting them. Sample election rules and blank forms are also included in the guide.

The Simulation demonstrates how to organize an election for a class of students or a group of young people. It explains their right to vote and how to exercise those rights.

Teachers who may be interested in receiving more on this topic, can order [Exploring Canada's Electoral System](#) and the [History of the Vote](#).

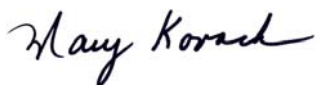
There are also resources available for students who are running for elections in their college or university. These resources help students to conduct elections fairly and to understand the [role/s of different officers and candidates](#).

* Information provided by [Elections Canada](#).

There are many ways to engage children in their citizenry. Teachers have a host of free resources at their disposal to support their efforts in and outside the classroom. This week's issue of Chalk Talk highlights the Elections Canada Website that features classroom exercises for junior and senior grade levels designed to involve students in learning about the electoral process.

Til next time, happy voting!

[Let us know your thoughts.](#)



Mary Kovack

Education News

[Young Voters Seek Issues That Matter to Them](#) - CTV.ca News Staff

During this election campaign, all the parties are going to be after the elusive youth vote; that is: those 2.6 million Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. But as large as this demographic is, it's also notoriously apathetic during elections.

[Will Youth Leave its Mark?](#) - Allison Lampert - The Gazette

Civics education is not mandatory in Quebec, so it's up to schools and teachers to try to get young people interested in exercising their democratic right - and duty

[He Gets Youth to Vote](#) - Nicholas Davis - The Toronto Sun

Every time there's an election, Paul Green's phone rings off the hook. As executive director of Rush The Vote, a non-profit organization that encourages young people to vote, it's something Green is getting used to.

[Campaign Helps Teachers Bring Curriculum to Life](#) - Caroline Alphonso - The Globe and Mail

Teachers are ditching notebooks and using mock debates, all-candidates meetings to engage students in the election campaign. 'In terms of teaching moments, it is a gift'

Facts & Figures



- According to [Statistics Canada](#), 58% of eligible voters turned out for the 2004 General Election
- Regionally, the proportion of young adults between the ages of 22 - 29 who voted in 2004 was highest in Quebec (74%), followed by the Atlantic Provinces (64%), the Prairies (56%), Ontario (53%), and British Columbia (49%)*
- Approximately 32% of young adults with less than a high school education engaged in at least one non-voting activity, compared with 69% of those with a university degree*

*Source: [Statistics Canada - Canadian Social Trends: Winter 2005](#)

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