Expanding Voter Registration in High Schools

A Toolkit for Local Leaders

The Center for Popular Democracy works to create equity, opportunity, and a dynamic democracy in partnership with high-impact base-building organizations, organizing alliances, and progressive unions. CPD strengthens our collective capacity to envision and win an innovative pro-worker, pro-immigrant, racial and economic justice agenda.

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EXPANDING HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION: A PRIMER

BACKGROUND

American democracy is at a crossroads. More than a decade of attacks on voting rights and democratic participation—from *Shelby County v. Holder*[1] to restrictive state voter ID laws—have undermined core principles of representative democracy and have eroded the political participation of everyday people and the Rising American Electorate.[2] When it comes to the ballot box, young voters in particular lag behind the rest of the electorate in terms of voter registration and turnout. In the 2016 general election, up to 45 percent of citizens aged 18 to 24 were not registered to vote and up to 57 percent of eligible voters in that age group did not vote.[3] By contrast, up to 30 percent of the total population was not registered to vote and up to 39 percent of total eligible voters did not vote.[4] Legal obstacles, voter confusion, and lack of engagement all diminish the participation rates of young voters. One survey found that many young voters face uncertainty about their voting rights, with 43 percent unaware of early voting laws and 42 percent unsure of photo ID requirements.[5] This means that the voices of millennials—the country's most racially diverse generation[6]—and the generation coming up behind them, are significantly underrepresented in our democracy.

> **"I'm 17 years old and I can't vote, but I led one of the biggest voter registration campaigns in Arizona. I see the future of Arizona and of the United States as being led by youth and youth power. It's necessary for people who are eligible to vote to do so because there are a lot of undocumented folks and people with felonies that are not able to. Having people in office that look like me, that sound like me, and that represent me would be such a step forward in our future and for our communities."**
>
> —Alexis Garcia, Civic Engagement Organizer, LUCHA

The problem is not apathy or indifference among youth. For decades, young people across the country, particularly in Black and Brown communities, have been organizing around issues impacting their communities, including immigration policy, policing practices, access to education, and more. However, voters face myriad obstacles to the ballot box, many of which were erected to blunt the political power of young people and communities of color. For example, after millennials turned out in record numbers in 2008,[7] some state legislatures responded with voter restrictions that disproportionately impacted young voters. Since 2010, 14 states have instituted more restrictive voter ID laws.[8] Six states refuse to accept student ID,[9] a policy which appears targeted to restrict young voters.

While these restrictive laws create significant challenges, local jurisdictions have the power to help increase access to the ballot for young people. The expansion of voter registration programs in high schools is one concrete policy solution designed to ensure every eligible young person is registered to vote.

> **"I noticed that once we sit down and talk to high schoolers, that's when they're interested in registering to vote. You have to actually talk to them and explain what the impact can be. If you just say "hey, you should vote," they say, "my vote doesn't count." If you engage them and explain why they should do it, they will register.**
>
> —Amadi Brown, High School Fellow, Florida Student Power

POLICY SOLUTION

Where legally feasible,[10] school board and school districts have the power to increase voter registration and turnout by implementing policies that require high schools to offer registration opportunities to students who are eligible to register and vote in upcoming elections. In most states, school boards can mandate that schools offer students who have reached the age of eligibility to register, the opportunity to register at school. In states that allow for pre-registration, eligible students under the age of 18 can pre-register to vote so they are automatically added to the registration rolls when they turn 18.

Under high school registration policies, designated school officials (typically school principals and their staff) provide dedicated voter registration opportunities and support to their students. Schools can encourage registration by engaging students through assemblies, classroom registration drives, and other methods. Schools are responsible for distributing and collecting registration forms or making the electronic registration equivalent available, and for ensuring that students have the support, assistance, and information they need to properly complete and return the registration forms. Election administrators are responsible for distributing registration materials to schools or the electronic equivalent, and processing forms upon completion.[11]

> **"We should put young people who are in high schools at the forefront of the planning process and have them lead in strategizing. They're the ones who are going to know what it is that will make a program successful. Including the voices of people who are not eligible to vote in the planning process and creating opportunities for them to share their stories is also important. Even if they're not eligible to vote, they can persuade others to vote. Ultimately, young people know what it's going to take to get other young people to get out and vote."**
> —Ana Garcia, State Coordinator, Florida Student Power

High school registration programs are most effective when integrated with voter education programs aimed at encouraging participation and turnout amongst new voters. Comprehensive high school voter registration programs should include clear guidelines for program structure, thorough and supportive training programs for students and administrators, and outreach efforts that promote schools as places to register to vote. Importantly, school administrators should partner with community-based and student-led organizations. Together, they should develop robust curricula that feel relevant and accessible to all students—including those who may not be eligible or are not yet eligible to vote. Curriculum and engagement should be designed to connect voter registration to long-term civic engagement.[12]

Finally, local elected officials should partner with youth-led organizations, community groups, voting rights organizations and student activists to successfully pass such a reform. Some examples of how local elected officials can work with youth-led organizations in their jurisdictions include attending youth-led town halls in which elected officials respond to young people's ideas and questions, holding public hearings, inviting young leaders to speak, and amplifying their voices in the media.

Many jurisdictions across the country have already begun taking on this challenge in innovative and exciting ways. Schools in Arkansas, Iowa, and Virginia have formally incorporated material about voter registration and the importance of voting into the required curriculum for students.[13] In Maryland and Louisiana, schools have dedicated assemblies to register students to vote; some have invited local election officials to explain the process to students and demonstrate how a voting machine works.[14] Other schools have shown success by engaging students in the process. Both Maryland and Nebraska train "student registrars" to run the voter registration programs at their schools.[15] In Texas, Arizona, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Florida, and other states, student leaders from community-based organizations lead voter registration drives and conduct peer-to-peer outreach to convey the importance and impact of voting to their classmates.[16]

RESOURCES

This toolkit includes materials to assist policymakers and advocates in developing, passing, and implementing high school voter registration policies and ensuring effective outreach and engagement about the potential and impact of the policy. It consists of three parts:

- **A model high school voter registration policy and model regulations,** which provide school boards and other local jurisdictions with model policy language and highlight key areas where local elected officials will need to tailor the policy to fit within the unique context of their jurisdiction. The model regulations include provisions on carrying out the policy, defining the responsibilities of schools and school officials, reporting requirements, enforcement mechanisms, and curriculum requirements.

- **Best practices for building comprehensive high school voter registration programs,** including considerations for how to effectively engage community groups, student leaders, and students in the design of a successful voter registration program.

- **Communications materials,** which help local elected officials and advocates communicate effectively about the importance of student voter registration and why high school-based voter registration is an effective policy. This includes (1) a set of talking points that can be tailored and used by elected officials and advocates when speaking about the issue, in opinion pieces, or in press advisories; and (2) digital content, containing sample graphics, tweets, and facebook posts.

To learn more about other policy reforms that local jurisdictions can take to expand voting rights, read the Center for Popular Democracy's report, "Deepening Our Democracy: How Localities Can Expand Voting Rights."[17]

1. In 2005, Georgia and Indiana pioneered new strict voter ID laws while pushing unsubstantiated claims about "voter fraud." In 2013, the Supreme Court in Shelby County v. Holder, 570 U.S. 2 (2013) struck down a key provision in the Voting Rights Act, gutting the requirement that certain states and counties with a history of racially discriminatory voting practices get approval of any changes to their election laws with the Department of Justice before putting them in place. This ruling opened the floodgates of states enacting laws that restrict registration and voting, effectively disenfranchising countless voters. Since 2010, 25 states have passed restrictive voting laws, including voter ID laws and laws that make it more difficult for citizens to register to vote, cut back on early voting, and made it more difficult to restore the right to vote for those who have lost their rights because of a felony conviction.

2. The Rising American Electorate refers to Millennials (ages 23 to 38 in 2019 as defined by Pew Research Center), people of color, and unmarried women, which now account for more than half of the voting age population in the US. See: "The Rising American Electorate," The Voter Participation Center, Accessed June 2018, https://www.voterparticipation.org/our-mission/ the-rising-american-electorate/.

3. "Voting and Registration in the Election of 2016," Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html.

4. Ibid.

5. "Knowledge about Voter Laws Still Lacking," The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Accessed January 2019, http://civicyouth.org/knowledge-about-voter-laws-still-lacking/?cat_id=17.

6. William H. Frey, "Diversity defines the millennial generation," Brookings, June 28, 2016, https:// www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/ diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation/.

7. Michael Hals and Morley Winograd, "It's Official: Millennials Realigned American Politics in 2008, *Huffington Post*, Updated May 25, 2011, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-hais-and-morley-winograd/its-official-millennials_b_144357.html.

8. "New Voting Restrictions in America," The Brennan Center, Accessed January 2019, https://www.brennancenter.org/new-voting-restrictions-america.

9. "Student ID as Voter ID," Campus Vote Project, Accessed January 2019, http://campusvoteproject.org/administrators/student-id-as-voter-id/.

10. Local jurisdictions should draft policies to reflect their specific state- and municipal-level legal and administrative context. School districts and local jurisdictions will want to start with an evaluation of the legal authority of their jurisdiction as it relates to state law regulating voter registration.

11. "High school voter registration FAQ," Fair Vote, Accessed January 2019, http://archive.fairvote.org/media/rtv/HS%20Reg%20FAQ_July31.pdf.

12. It should be noted that the success of voter registration programs are significantly bolstered by long-term engagement in communities and other efforts to increase civic engagement and voter turnout. This requires an investment of resources and energy that extends beyond the length of election cycles.

13. Jody Herman and Lauren Forbes, "Engaging America's Youth Through High School Voter Registration Programs," Project Vote, http://funderscommittee.org/files/high_school_voter_registration_programs.pdf, 13.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid, 11.

16. Focus group with Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), Texas Organizing Project (TOP), and the Florida Student Power Network, December 12, 2018.

17. "Deepening Our Democracy: How Localities Can Expand Voting Rights," Center for Popular Democracy, January 2018, https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/deepening-our-democracy-how-localities-can-expand-voting-rights.

"A strong and vibrant democracy includes the active participation and empowerment of young people. Through our new policy, our high schools offer all eligible students the opportunity to register or pre-register as voters. One crucial role of public education is to prepare the next generation of active citizens and leaders. We know that registering students to vote during high school will increase the likelihood of their voter participation in the future. We also know that the path forward to a sustainable future requires ALL voices at the table. That includes young voices!"

—Joe Luginbill, Eau Claire School Board

Photo: Make the Road
New Jersey

HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION:
MODEL POLICY

The [SCHOOL BOARD JURISDICTION] seeks to support the ability of every eligible [SCHOOL BOARD JURISDICTION] resident to exercise their fundamental right to vote. To that end, the district seeks to create a culture of voting and to encourage and support the civic participation of its students.

Therefore, be it resolved that the district shall facilitate a program of high school voter registration to encourage and promote students exercising the right to vote and participating in the electoral process.

The [SCHOOL BOARD JURISDICTION] authorizes the school district to take the necessary steps to ensure maximum participation, which shall include:

- District high schools shall register to vote all students who will reach [THE AGE OF ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER OR PRE-REGISTER UNDER STATE LAW] and are otherwise eligible to register to vote under state law, excepting any students who choose not to register. District high schools will set aside dedicated time for registration activities at least twice per year where every eligible student shall be provided the opportunity to register to vote, or individually decline if the student so chooses. Registration shall be provided within the school and supported by trained school staff and may be assisted by student government, student groups, and/or nonpartisan community volunteers and organizations. Further opportunities to register will be provided within the school year-round.

- Upon turning [THE AGE OF ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER OR PRE-REGISTER UNDER STATE LAW], all students in [SCHOOL BOARD JURISDICTION] shall receive a notification from the district with information about voter registration.

- Voter registration information shall be made available on the district website, through the school newsletter and school emails, and in the principal's office, library, guidance office, or other similarly accessible locations throughout the school year. Information about voter registration and civic participation shall be incorporated in high school social studies or other appropriate classes in alignment with state standards.

- High school announcements shall include periodic information educating students about the process of voter registration. Eligible high school students may be excused from school to be poll workers or poll observers in elections.

- [*Include for states where legally possible*] In coordination with the [AUTHORITY RESPONSIBLE FOR VOTER REGISTRATION]'s office, schools shall provide at least two days of in-person absentee or early voting, to be made available in a designated place within the building prior to a scheduled election.

District high schools shall work with the school district administration, student government representatives, and nonpartisan community organizations and volunteers to provide opportunities for students to register to vote. High schools are encouraged to facilitate collaboration with these organizations on implementation of the voter registration program, including education and engagement activities to foster a culture of voting and participation.

HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION:
MODEL REGULATIONS

SECTION 1: RESPONSIBILITIES OF HIGH SCHOOLS AND DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Explanation of Regulation Text	*Model Text of Regulations*
This clause directs the district superintendent to designate the principal of each district high school as the responsibility and authority for implementing the policy.	(a) The principal of each district high school shall be designated as the school official responsible for implementing the high school registration policy. The principal shall outline a building-level plan to implement the policy requirements and be responsible for implementing the policy and complying with its ongoing requirements.
This clause lays out each school's obligation under the policy and requires that they must do it at least twice per year.	(b) At least twice per school year, the school shall provide the opportunity to register to vote to every student in the school who is eligible to register to vote under relevant state laws.
In states where the law allows individuals to be pre-registered before they turn 18, this clause provides that the policy should also include pre-registration of these students. (At the time of publication, those states include: CA, CO, DE, FL, HI, LA, MD, ME, MA, NC, NJ, NV, NY, OR, RI, UT, WA, WV and the District of Columbia. AK, GA, IA, MO, and TX permit individuals to pre-register ranging from several months to half a year before they turn 18.)	(c) The school shall provide the opportunity to pre-register to vote to every student in the school who is eligible to pre-register to vote, as authorized by the state's pre-registration statute, [STATE STATUTE].
This clause requires each school to dedicate time for the exclusive purpose of registering students to vote and to provide a conducive and supported environment for completing the voter registration process.	(d) The school shall set aside a minimum of 30 minutes, at least twice per school year, exclusively for students to complete their voter registration application. Students shall be provided a dedicated and quiet environment for this purpose and provide staff support to assist students in filling out registration applications.
This clause requires each school to provide each student individually the opportunity to register to vote or decline registration. It is insufficient to simply make voter registration materials available; schools must individually provide eligible students the opportunity to register or decline.	(e) The opportunity to register to vote, or to decline to register, shall be provided individually to each student eligible to register to vote, at least twice per school year.

Voter registration activities are most effective when school staff work collaboratively with student leaders and with community organizations that have experience doing voter registration engagement.

This clause requires the district to create and provide approved materials to high schools to support student registration, including explanatory information so that students understand if they are eligible to vote and to educate them on the process and importance of voter registration and voting.

This clause requires each school to provide explanatory information about the registration and voting process and to ensure that staff, students, and volunteers are trained to assist students with understanding the eligibility requirements and registration process.

This clause encourages schools to provide voter registration materials and support in the student's primary language whenever possible to ensure that eligible non-English speakers are given the same opportunity to review eligibility requirements and to register to vote.

(f) The school principal shall work with school staff, teachers, student government representatives, student organizations, and nonpartisan community organizations and volunteers to implement voter registration activities.

(g) The district shall create materials tailored to students with information on eligibility, how to register, how the voting process works, and how to vote. The district shall provide approved materials to every school subject to this policy for use in their voter registration programs.

(h) Each school shall provide students information on eligibility to vote, how to register, how the voting process works, and how to vote. All staff, students, and volunteers shall be trained on voter registration eligibility requirements and shall review voter eligibility requirements with students before helping them register to vote.

(i) Whenever feasible, schools shall provide voter registration materials and instructions in the student's primary language.

SECTION 2: TRANSMISSION OF REGISTRATION FORMS

This section requires that schools submit forms within a designated period of time—and via mail, in person or online, if available—to the appropriate state or local elections agency. The policy and regulations should follow state law when mandating the duration for return of completed forms and should not exceed 5–10 days.

(a) Each school shall deliver completed registration forms to the [STATE/LOCAL ELECTION AGENCY] within [XX] days of completion of those forms.

SECTION 3: PROTECTING AGAINST UNDUE INFLUENCE

This section protects against undue influence by prohibiting conduct that could inappropriately influence students seeking to register to vote.

(a) School staff or any student or volunteer involved in school voter registration programs shall not:

    (i) seek to influence an applicant's political preference or party designation;

    (ii) display any political preference or party allegiance;

    (iii) make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose or effect of which is to discourage the applicant from registering to vote; or

    (iv) make any statement to an applicant or take any action the purpose or effect of which is to lead the applicant to believe that a decision to register or not to register has any bearing on how the student will be evaluated academically, or whether the student may receive other services offered through the school.

(b) The decision to register to vote is voluntary. Students can decline registration for any reason without providing a reason for declining.

SECTION 4: COMPLIANCE, ENFORCEMENT, & REPORTING

This clause ensures that school officials receive proper notice of their obligations under the policy. Notice of this policy should be given to school authorities at the earliest feasible time and no later than 60 days before the state's registration deadline to ensure proper implementation before registration deadline.

(a) Within [XX] days of the effective date of this policy and regulations, and then annually no later than 60 days before the state deadline for voter registration, the superintendent shall notify each school of its responsibilities under this section in writing and school principal shall confirm, in writing, that he or she received notice of the requirements of this policy and regulations.

This clause requires the school board to take action to ensure implementation of the policy and ongoing compliance with the policy.

(b) The superintendent shall work with each school to ensure each school's implementation of this policy and compliance therewith.

This clause details the school board's responsibilities and tools to ensure compliance, including compiling, analyzing, and publishing reports on voter registration.

(c) The superintendent shall monitor and report to the school board on school implementation and compliance including compiling data and statistics related to school compliance with the policy. The district shall issue a public report on the implementation of this section that disaggregates such data by school, on an annual basis.

This clause lays out the reporting requirements of the policy, including the specific data that schools should collect and how often it should be reported. Data collection and publication is critical to ensuring effective implementation and compliance with the policy.

(d) Schools are responsible for collecting the following data and submitting the data in an annual report to the district. The report shall include, to the extent ascertainable:

    (i) the number of students who were offered the opportunity to register to vote;

    (ii) the number of students who were offered the opportunity to pre-register to vote;

    (iii) the number of voter registration applications completed;

    (iv) the number of pre-registration applications completed;

    (v) the number of students who declined registration;

    (vi) a numerical breakdown of who completed applications by grade;

    (vii) a numerical breakdown of students who declined to register by grade; and

    (viii) the number of registration forms transmitted to the [LOCAL/ STATE ELECTION AGENCY], including paper forms and forms transmitted electronically.

    (ix) Such reports shall be submitted to the [SCHOOL BOARD] by [MONTH AND DAY] and [MONTH AND DAY] of each year, with the first reports due by [MONTH, DAY, and YEAR].

This clause protects student privacy by excluding personal identifying information from compliance reports.

(e) Any report produced under this section shall exclude any personal identifying information.

SECTION 5: CURRICULUM

This clause encourages the development of curricula that incorporate voter registration into the broader curriculum of each high school, to increase the understanding and impact of voter registration among students.

(a) Within the first year of implementation, the principal and [ADDITIONAL DESIGNATED SCHOOL OFFICIAL(S)] shall create an academic plan to integrate student voter registration and voting into school curriculum.

Schools should prioritize student engagement and are encouraged to work with community and student organizations, leaders, and volunteers to develop curriculum and programing that increases student engagement and civic participation.

(b) The principal shall prioritize student and community engagement in the development and implementation of civic and voting education curriculum. This includes working with student government, student organizations, and nonpartisan community organizations to develop education and engagement curriculum that fosters a culture of voting, civic education and participation.

Student organizations and nonpartisan community organizations are a critical source of voter information and nonpartisan civic engagement for new registrants and voters. To ensure students are provided access to this voter information and engagement, schools must offer designated space and time for these organizations in school's common spaces like the lunchroom, student assemblies, etc.

(c) The principal shall provide dedicated time and designated space in schools' common areas for student organizations and designated nonpartisan organizations to provide voter information and engagement.

SECTION 6: PRIVACY PROTECTIONS

This section requires the district to create a privacy policy that protects students and prevents any data from being shared in ways that could compromise students' privacy or safety.

a) Within [XX] days after the effective date of this policy, the superintendent, in consultation with the school board and in accordance with any state and federal laws, shall adopt a privacy policy for schools that:

   i) specifies each class of internal users within each school who shall have authorized access to voter registration information, specifying for each such class the permissions and levels of access to be granted and setting forth other safeguards to protect the privacy of voter registration information;

   (ii) prohibits disclosure of an individual's decision to decline registration including disclosure of the reason an individual declined or was not registered;

   (iii) prohibits schools from transmitting to election officials information other than that required for voter registration; and

   (iv) prohibits the disclosure of information relating to persons in categories designated confidential by federal or state law, including victims of domestic violence or stalking, prosecutors and law enforcement personnel, and participants in a witness protection program.

This clause specifies the time frame for schools to draw up or enhance their privacy policies to put them in compliance with this policy and any applicable state and federal laws.

a) Within [XX] days after the effective date of this section, the superintendent, in consultation with [LOCAL/STATE ELECTION AGENCY], and in accordance with any state and federal laws, shall review current privacy and security measures applied to the existing voter registration and electronic voter registration files, and, as provided in this section, establish enhanced standards and procedures to further safeguard the privacy, integrity, and security of the information used pursuant to this policy and regulations.

BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAM

A strong policy is only one piece of a successful high school registration program. Below are several best practices for school administrators to engage community organizations, students, and student leaders in designing an impactful high school registration program and maximizing student civic engagement.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION PROGRAMS WITH STUDENT, COMMUNITY AND TEACHER INPUT AND ENGAGEMENT

Involve students in every step of the process.

- Give students formal leadership roles in the planning process and meaningfully engage students at the outset of developing the high school registration program in their school. Include a cross section of students, including students who are eligible and not eligible to vote.
- Maximize student input in the implementation of the school's voter registration program. Young people have the best understanding of what it will take to engage their peers and make a voter registration program successful. For example, young people provide insight about how best to conduct outreach and plan assemblies and events that will engage their peers. Students can also help create a curriculum that will speak to and engage their peers about the importance of voting and their role in the democratic process.

Ground civic engagement curricula in students' lived experiences and adapt to the needs of the school.

- Include a robust educational component in the school's registration program that helps students understand the importance of the power of their vote and participation on issues that impact them.
- Design curricula that center students' priorities and experiences. Curricula should cultivate students' critical thinking and analytical skills to help them consider the issues and values they care about before introducing voting and the mechanics of participation. This approach can help to equip students with a clear understanding of the connections between issues directly impacting their lives—for example, access to higher education, access to resources in their communities, reform of criminal justice and immigration policies, etc.—and how they can exercise their right to vote to impact policy decisions.
- Adapt curricula to meet the needs of the school. Curricula should be tailored to the specific setting that works best for the school to reach its students in the classroom, homeroom, during assemblies, and other settings. Curricula can be integrated into existing government, civics, or US history courses, or can exist as a standalone program. Youth leaders and student organizations should be engaged to inform the settings that will be most successful.

Partner with community-based nonprofit organizations to design curricula and engage students.

- Engage the community and nonprofit organizations with deep experience in developing civic and voter engagement programs in the community. Schools should work with organizations that are already embedded in, and familiar with, the experiences and needs of local communities and young people to develop the educational component of high school registration programs.
- Develop partnerships with organizations that work directly with and/or organize students, young people, and low-income, immigrant, and communities of color with historically lower registration and turnout rates.
- Give community organizations and young people a lead role in working with and training teachers, school staff, and students on effectively engaging students in the curricula.

Build a school culture that values civic engagement and voting by cultivating teacher and staff buy-in.

- Cultivate a culture among the school faculty and staff that values and prioritizes voter registration and engagement. Schools should encourage teachers, staff and students to build relationships with the community organizations and student leaders driving program development, and should create opportunities within their classrooms to talk about registration and voting.
- Encourage teachers to help to publicize events and registration drives within the school, and to attend as many of these events as possible. The engagement and buy-in of teachers can be hugely influential in how students view the importance and value of such a program.

BUILD VOTER REGISTRATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS THAT ARE INCLUSIVE OF THE FULL STUDENT BODY

Ensure that the school voter registration program is sensitive to the full range of students in the classroom, including students who are ineligible or not yet eligible to vote because of their age or immigration status, or because they have been incarcerated.

- Introduce students to various forms of civic engagement and participation, including but not limited to voting.
- During voter registration activities and other related events, provide students who are not eligible to vote other ways of participating, for example, through community service activities and volunteering.
- Include the voices of students who are not eligible to vote by creating platforms for them to share their stories and experiences, and build opportunities for all students to help get their peers registered and out to vote.

PROVIDE EXTENSIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENT-DRIVEN ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Support peer-to-peer outreach programs.

- Allow and encourage students and community organizations to run peer-to-peer outreach programs to promote deeper student engagement. To be successful, engaging students to register to vote requires more than sign-up tables and forms; it requires opportunities for individualized conversations among students about the importance and impact of voting.
- Cultivate dialogue within the school to ensure that the voter registration program reaches students who might need some extra encouragement or support. For example, by sharing personal motivations for voting, students can play an influential role in recruiting their peers to register to vote.

Support supplementary student-driven activities to ensure broad reach and engagement.

- To complement the dedicated school registration program, allow and encourage additional voter registration events—run by students and community organizations—within the school and during school hours. Schools should amplify these activities and allow organizations to hold these activities during the times of day and in locations that ensure broad accessibility and reach, for example, during lunch periods or during a portion of a school assembly. Schools should avoid relegating additional voter registration events to off-hours or isolated classrooms that receive little foot traffic.

Support and build leadership development pathways for students.

- Partner with community-based, student, and youth organizations to create opportunities for students to organize and engage their classmates, families, and communities beyond the walls of the classroom.
- Foster long-term connections between students and community-based organizations that allow for deeper civic engagement and participation in volunteer activities beyond voter registration.

EXPANDING HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION: COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS

TALKING POINTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION REFORM

Too few young people have access to the ballot.
Our voting laws are outdated and, in many states, actively hostile to voting rights, leaving too many young Americans disenfranchised. As of 2016, more than a million eligible 18-year-olds were not registered to vote, and up to 45 percent eligible 18- to 24-year-olds were not registered to vote.[1] Twenty-two million teenagers are set to turn 18 by 2020.[2] Ensuring that each can register and cast a ballot would be transformational.

• Our elections must represent the voices of all Americans, including young people. Our young people are our future, but their power can't be harnessed if they can't vote. The future of our democracy is at stake.

States have attacked the voting rights of young people. Our state has been openly hostile to the voting rights of young people, making it harder for young people to vote with unnecessary and restrictive new requirements. [To see if your state restricts voter ID for youth, see: http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx] We should be making it easier to vote, not harder.

Schools can and must help young people exercise their right to vote. As the voting rights of young people increasingly come under attack, school districts can and must take action to to ensure young people have access to the ballot. School districts and school boards have a variety of tools at their disposal, including providing voter registration forms and helping students who will turn 18 by the next election to fill them out. In states that allow it, 16- and 17-year-olds can also "pre-register" to be automatically added to the voting rolls when they turn 18.

• Our [city/county] can and will step up to help young people vote. If every young person registered to vote today, our democracy could better represent the voices of young people tomorrow.

American youth are facing a crisis of civic engagement. Thanks in part to policies that have added a host of confusing new barriers to voter registration, many young voters face uncertainty about their voting rights: 43 percent are unaware of early voting laws and 42 percent are unsure of photo ID requirements.[3] By incorporating registration and voter education into the culture of our high schools, we will increase voter participation and civic engagement in the long term.

• As a [city/county], we can and must take action to ensure young people know their rights when it comes to voting. By making voter registration more accessible, not only will we raise the voting rates among young people, we will also set them up for a lifetime of civic engagement.

Student movements have shown us that we shouldn't underestimate the power of young people. A deep history of youth organizing in Black and Brown communities across the country, including the recent #NeverAgain movement, has shown that young people can and do have the will to be heard and to advance bold change. But students must have the power to vote in order to translate this energy into lasting political power.

• To turn youth energy into power, we need structural change, and we need it soon. We have to ensure every eligible young person can make their voice heard. Our schools can lead the way by helping young people to register and vote.

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1. "Voting and Registration in the Election of 2016," Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-580.html.

2. "22x20," Accessed January 2019, https://www.22x20.org/.

3. "Knowledge about Voter Laws Still Lacking," The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, Accessed January 2019, http://civicyouth.org/knowledge-about-voter-laws-still-lacking/?cat_id=17.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

The following content can be used to promote local voter registration reform efforts via social media.

HASHTAGS

Primary: **#ExpandTheVote**

Secondary: **#vote #voting**

SAMPLE TWEETS AND FACEBOOK POSTS

Graphics for social media sharing are available here:
http://bit.ly/expandthevotehstoolkitsharedfolder

General

2 ways we can #ExpandTheVote for young folks:

✓ High school registration

✓ High school pre-registration

Our democracy thrives when everyone can vote & when everyone is involved

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Momentous change can and is happening here at the local level

And the best way to do that is to make sure we have engaged and informed citizens,

Including our high school students. #ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Aspirational / Visionary

Can you imagine the impact on our democracy if every eligible student was registered to vote before they graduated from high school?

There is power in numbers, and we are stronger together.

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Imagine if all eligible high school students were pre-registered to vote at school and then automatically registered once they turned 18.

Think of how powerful and informed we'd be.

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Defining the Problem

Since 2010, 25 states have restricted the right to vote. [If applicable] Our state is one of them. We have the chance to fight back to #ExpandTheVote!

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

In [JURISDICTION], there are [XX] people who will turn 18 before the next election.

Imagine if they were all registered to vote before they leave high school!

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

In [JURISDICTION], our community cares about [insert issue here].

Many of them will be voting age soon. They have the same right to have their voices heard to make change for their community.

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Only 45% of eligible 18- to 24-year-olds were registered to vote in 2016.

That's lower than any other generation.

We must do what we can to make sure everyone is involved in our democratic process.

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

In a recent study, less than 20% of young people said they trusted their local elected officials.

This is a problem & must be fixed. One way to do that, is to get youth involved early with the political process.

http://populardemocracy.org/expandthevote

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

In [20XX], [JURISDICTION] school district had [XX] unregistered voters. We can change that.

Let's change this by reaching potential young voters and getting them registered before they leave high school!

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

🚫 43% of eligible Latinx Americans
🚫 44% eligible Asian Americans
🚫 30% of eligible Black Americans

are NOT registered to vote. We have the power to change this by making voter registration accessible!

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Did you know that up to 1 in 4 eligible people in the United States are not registered to vote?

Here's how we can change that: http://populardemocracy.org/expandthevote

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]

Millennials make up the largest voting bloc, but are the least likely to vote.

If we want a thriving democracy, we must do what we can to reach millennials and the next generation of voters.

Here's how high schools can change that: http://populardemocracy.org/expandthevote

#ExpandTheVote

[INSERT GRAPHIC OF CHOICE]