

# Kids Voting Program Q&A

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1. **How much does it cost to implement a Kids Voting Program?** There are a few hard costs, a few soft costs, and a few optional costs involved with Kids Voting:

*Hard costs include:*

- **Partner Fee: \$100 (for districts with more than four buildings).** Registering your district by paying the \$100 partner fee gives you access to the Kids Voting logo, election-based curriculum and program coordinator resources on the Minnesota Civic Youth website. As a Kids Voting partner, you will also receive Kids Voting ballot boxes, voting screens and “I Voted” stickers. Your election results will be compiled and promoted in Minnesota as part of the statewide totals, and nationwide as part of the Kids Voting USA totals.
- **Ballot printing:** Ballots can be printed on any printer. You can choose to print the ballots yourself (at no cost) or Minnesota Civic Youth will print them for you at cost (usually between \$.03- \$.07/ballot).

*Soft costs include:*

- **Program coordinator.** This person is a very part-time position (2-3 hours/wk from August-October, 20 hours/wk in the two weeks before the election). We’ve had program coordinators who were Community Education employees, district curriculum or communications directors, school administrators, or County Extension employees.
- **Steering committee.** Some communities choose to pull together a Steering Committee to determine the scope of the program and to divide up the responsibilities. This type of committee can also increase buy-in for the program across your organization. Possible members might include a representative from Community Education, a social studies teacher, a district administrator, curriculum director and parents. If you will be setting up your polling places outside of schools (See question 2), you will also want to include a local city elections official.
- **Volunteers.** On Election Day, you will need volunteers to staff the Kids Voting polling places. Start by identifying how many polling places you plan to have and then determining the hours they will be open. You will need at least two volunteers per polling place per shift. High school students can sometimes receive credit for National Honor Society or their IB program by volunteering for an activity like this. Another option is to tap into local businesses and ask them to “Adopt a Polling Place,” which includes providing volunteers on Election Day. A third possible source of volunteers is your school district PTO.

*Optional costs include:*

- **Ballot counting machine.** Minnesota Civic Youth has developed a partnership with Boston-based Clear Ballot to purchase ballot scanners for approximately \$1,000. The machines can scan up to 1,000 ballots per hour and include a dedicated laptop with full security and support pre-loaded. The



cost of the machine can be financed over three years. Ballots counted through this machine will be automatically uploaded to the cloud and integrated with election totals across the state. If you choose not to use a ballot counting machine, you will be asked to hand-count the ballots and send them to Minnesota Civic Youth on Election Night.

- **Pre-election activities.** Some communities choose to sponsor civic forums, candidate debates, in-school speakers or even election related contests to allow students to learn more about the candidates. Other communities create a youth-focused Voter Guide that all students receive. These are optional activities that enhance the student experience but are not necessary to implement a successful Kids Voting Program.

If your community does not have sufficient funding to cover the program costs, Minnesota Civic Youth can help connect you to local service organizations (Rotary, Lion or Kiwanis Clubs) who often have an interest in supporting this important civic activity.

2. **Where do we locate the Kids Voting polling places?** Your community needs to decide whether to set up the Kids Voting polling places in the schools (cafeterias or media centers work best) or within your official precinct locations. Issues to consider include:
  - Holding the election in schools gives every student the opportunity to participate; if the election is held in the local precincts, young people are dependent on their parents to get them there.
  - Holding the election in the local precinct provides a more authentic experience and in some cases, increases adult voter turnout because they are encouraged to come by their children.
  - Which location will be easiest for you to staff/recruit volunteers?
  - How much do you want to coordinate with local election officials vs. coordinating within your school district?
3. **Do we have to use the Kids Voting curriculum?** No, you do not. The majority of communities that have implemented a Kids Voting Program do choose to incorporate some type of classroom lesson to help students understand the rights and responsibilities connected to voting. However, you can choose to let teachers choose their own curriculum or you can choose not to incorporate lessons at all. The election-based curriculum provided by Minnesota Civic Youth meets MN State Standards for Social Studies.
4. **Is it worth the effort?** Yes! Research shows that even as a brief school intervention, the Kids Voting Program increases students' attention to the news, encourages deliberative issues-based discussions in and outside school, and enhances their sense of civic identity. Students who participate in the Kids Voting Program are more responsive to the civic environment, more attuned to political messages flowing from the media, and more willing to share their knowledge and opinions with parents and friends. In addition, research shows that practicing civic habits at a young age can support a lifetime of active citizenship.

For more information on the Kids Voting Program in Minnesota, please contact Amy Anderson at [amy@mncivicyouth.org](mailto:amy@mncivicyouth.org) or 651-955-1679.

