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How can you influence your politicians?

Objective

To understand the importance of civic participation and the tools which allow individuals to engage in the political process.

Essential Questions

What forms do civic participation come in? Why does civic engagement matter?

Conversation

- Why have individuals in U.S. history come together in order to protest an issue they care about? It is important to note that not everyone feels comfortable with the idea of participating in a political protest. What are some other ways to get involved in addition to protests? Make a list as a class. (*Examples: Serve the community through charity, run for office in your town or city, attend town hall meetings, contact your state legislature to voice your opinion, organize a community event, etc.*)
- Ask students: Would you ever consider running for office one day? Why or why not? What are some issues in their own community that students feel passionate about? Which issues affect their lives directly? Make a list as a class.
- On the computer, research the contact information for their local elected representative. Determine current email addresses.

Homework

- Ask students to interview and take notes on an adult they know, whether a family member, teacher, coach, etc. Interview questions should include:
 - Have you ever “gotten involved” in an issue you care about? (*Examples: attended an inauguration, protest, town hall meeting, or other political event, contacted a politician, signed a petition, etc.*)
 - What is one issue, local or national, that you care about? Why?
- Then, ask students to write a short one-paragraph response on what they learned from the interview.
 - Who did you interview and why?



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- What did you learn about the person you interviewed that you did not know?
- What surprised you?
- Why is it important to talk with others about issues that matter? Why is it important to talk with others on issues that you may not agree on?
- How did this help you to form your own idea about the issue?

Finally, have students write a short email to an elected representative expressing an opinion about a topic important to them.

- Research proper layout of the email.
- Review spelling, grammar and word choice with students.
- Have them share the response when they receive one.