

Stroll to the Polls

The League of Women Voters® Naperville Award-Winning Voter Turnout Project

Stroll to the Polls is an effective, low-cost way to increase voter turnout in targeted precincts, while also engaging the next generation of voters as active participants in their democracy.

10 Easy Steps to Increasing Voter Turnout

1. Begin planning several months before your targeted election. Most of this project involves planning with just one morning or afternoon of active work.
2. Get a precinct map with street detail from your Election Commission.
3. Review **recent** voter turnout data from your local Election Commission and identify the voter precincts with the lowest turnout in the comparable past election (e.g. similar primary 4 years ago). We defined turnout as the number who voted as a percentage of registered voters in each precinct. Select precincts that are walkable; i.e., not precincts with a lot of apartment buildings, highways, dangerous traffic, or rural areas.
4. Connect with American Government, Civics, or History teachers, preferably in the high schools that serve this township/city/village/county, and explain the project to them.
5. Have teachers recruit students in their classes to canvass the targeted precinct(s) in teams.
 - teachers may want to offer extra credit points
 - teachers may want to have their students ask a few survey questions, such as "Are you a registered voter?" "Do you plan to vote?" "If you are not planning to vote, why?"
 - teachers should handle any required permission slips
6. Divide your target precinct up into small walkable units for canvassing and create a series of walking maps, one for each student canvassing team, that they can cover in an hour or an hour and a half.
7. Prepare a packet for each student canvassing team with:
 - walking map of the part of the precinct they are to canvass
 - clipboard
 - pen
 - slips of paper with information about election day, precinct location, nonpartisan online voter guide, early voting hours, and how to register to vote in your state
 - painter's tape in case the students need to leave one of the slips of paper behind at an address where no one answers the door (best to only use this on glass or storm doors)
 - a couple of pieces of candy for energy (Tip: Oriental Trading Company offers bulk candy in red, white, and blue!)
8. About one week before the selected election, meet at a location near your targeted precincts to send out your student canvassing teams. Teachers for each student team should be present to help supervise/check out their students.

9. Send out the student canvassing teams with their packets
 - using their maps, each team of student canvassers knocks on doors/rings doorbells to encourage residents to vote in the upcoming election. One student said, "We're not selling you anything, Ma'am, we're just selling democracy."
 - do not leave your location until all student canvassing teams are accounted for by their teachers.

10. After the election results are FINAL, review voter turnout numbers to assess if there was an increase in voter turnout from the previous comparable election, and how turnout change compared to other area precincts.

Supplies You May Need to Purchase

- Copies with voting information
- painter's tape
- clipboards & pens
- candy

Students get a real-world experience

The students involved in LWV Naperville's project were enthusiastic and they got a very real-world experience. They met people who were upbeat and patriotic, others were cynical, and some were regretful that they were not citizens and so could not vote.