Purpose: Students will learn about the campaign and election process while listening to Today on Election Day by Catherine Stier. Students will participate in a mock election activity.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Restate key ideas on voting and elections in the United States by recalling information from a book.
- Discuss their questions and knowledge on voting and elections through completing a classroom KWL chart.
• Define key election vocabulary: ballot, candidate, campaign, debate, political party, and polling place.

• Recognize ways that citizens can participate in the election process.

• Participate in a mock election.

• Support their opinion/vote by creating a campaign poster.

**Grades:** 1–3

**Duration:** 60–minute class period

**Materials:**

• *Today on Election Day* by Catherine Stier

• Chart paper and markers or blackboard for writing

• Copies of voting ballots and campaign poster template for students both available at [www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org)

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce students to the book that they will be listening to today.

   **Questions for students:**

   • What do you see on the cover?

   • Do you recognize any of the words in the picture?

   • What do you think we will learn about in this book?

   • Why is the girl wearing a sticker that says “Future Voter”?

   • Does anyone know how old you have to be to vote in the United States?

2. Use chart paper or the board to create a three–column KWL chart.

   • In the first column, ask the students to share what they think they know about voting and elections. If students need help, you might want to ask some follow-up questions.

   • Who do we vote for in the United States?

   • Why is voting important?

   • Where do we go to vote?
• In the second column, ask students to share what questions they have about voting or what they want to know.

• Inform students that they will help fill up the last column with what they learned about voting and elections after they have listened to the story.

3. Begin reading *Today on Election Day*. The first page of the book contains a lot of background information. Ask students several questions after reading this page to check for understanding and record student answers in the Learn column of the KWL chart.

**Questions for students:**

After page 1:

• In what month do we elect the President, Vice President, and Congress?

• Who are other leaders that we elect into office?

After pages 4–5:

• What are people called that run for office?

• What is a polling place?

**Note to teacher/lawyer in the classroom.** Page 6 states that “Our country is set up as democracy. That’s a system of governing that allows citizens to choose their own leaders.” Depending on the grade level of the students, you might want to rephrase this statement to say that our country is a republic or representative democracy where people vote for leaders to represent their interests.

After pages 8–9:

• What are the names of the two main political parties in our country?

After pages 10–11:

• Why do candidates have campaigns?

• During campaign time, what might we see on TV and in our communities?

• What do the candidates do when they are campaigning?

After pages 14–17:

• Who can vote in the country? How do they qualify to vote?
After pages 18–19:

- Jake watches a debate to learn more about the candidate’s ideas. What are other ways he could learn more about the candidate’s ideas?
- How do voters use the information they get from a campaign?

After pages 20–21:

- What does it mean to have a secret ballot? Do you think this is important? Why? What might happen if our ballot wasn’t secret?

4. After reading the book, return to the KWL chart. Review with students to see if the book answered any of their questions. Ask students to share what they learned and add their responses to the L column.

**Participating in a mock election**

Explain the following scenario to students.

They will be having a mock or pretend election where each of them will have to cast a vote. They will be voting on the art utensil or art materials that they will be able to use in school for the rest of the year. Students can vote for markers or colored pencils. The art material that gets the most votes will be the only one available for students to use on projects in class and on school assignments.

1. Pass out the ballots to students, available at [www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org)
   Have students circle the name of the art utensil they are voting for and then return their ballot to a designated area (this could be a box or bag). Once the votes are counted, announce the winner. Ask if students who didn’t vote for the winning art material would like to share how they feel. If there was going to be another election on the school’s art supplies, what could they do to try and help the art material that they wanted get more votes?

2. Distribute election campaign poster template to students available at [www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org). Have students create campaign posters for the art material that they voted for. Students can include positive words and images that explain why others should vote for it too.

3. Have students share their posters with the class. Has anyone changed their mind about which art material they would vote for?

**Extension Activity:** Visit the State Bar of Texas’s I was the first. Vote for me! website at [http://www.texasbar.com/iwasthefirst/index.html](http://www.texasbar.com/iwasthefirst/index.html). Students can participate in a simulated voting activity. Students will read about various important historical figures and vote on whom a new school should be named after.