

Tips for Teachers: Election Edition

Big election years come with a lot of challenges for classroom teachers, as you figure out how to use this historic moment to teach while also balancing the safety and care of your students. Here are some tips from the Keshet Youth team to help prepare you for the classroom this fall.

1 Avoid role-plays and mock debates.

Candidates and individuals in office are increasingly engaging in name-calling, personal attacks, and mis-informed declarations. Inviting students to take on these personae can bring this behavior into the classroom and cause harm.

- ✓ Rather than pitting people or parties against each other and acting that out, consider hosting discussions about the U.S. party system, partisanship, the relationship between tradition and change, and how your students relate to these concepts.

2 Be mindful of the personal stakes your students have in this election.

Your LGBTQ+ students, especially your trans and non-binary students, are facing escalating attacks on their rights, as are your students who are immigrants or refugees (or are the children of immigrants or refugees), your students who might need to access reproductive care, etc. Your students may also be grappling with fears of increasing antisemitism and Christian nationalism.

- ✓ Rather than debating specific policies, consider hosting discussions about civic responsibility, the electoral process, voting age, and where students see themselves and their own values in relation to these.

3 Model and encourage sensitivity.

Emotions often run high as an election approaches. What practices can you bring into the classroom to help your students humanize each other and create space for these emotions?

- ✓ Mood meters and pulse surveys can help encourage active awareness and regulation during discussions: “I’m pausing the discussion for a quick pulse survey: “What emotions are we hearing so far?” “In what quadrant on this mood meter are we each finding ourselves right now?” You can then use their responses to determine whether a breath, a break, a reset, or something else is needed right now.

PLEASANTNESS

ENERGY

ENRAGED	PANICKED	STRESSED	JITTERY	SHOCKED	SURPRISED	UPBEAT	FESTIVE	EXHILERATED	ECSTATIC
LIVID	FURIOUS	FRUSTRATED	TENSE	STUNNED	HYPER	CHEERFUL	MOTIVATED	INSPIRED	ELATED
FUMING	FRIGHTENED	ANGRY	NERVOUS	RESTLESS	ENERGISED	LIVELY	ENTHUSIASTIC	OPTIMISTIC	EXCITED
ANXIOUS	APPREHENSIVE	WORRIED	IRRITATED	ANNOYED	PLEASED	HAPPY	FOCUSED	PROUD	THRILLED
REPULSED	TROUBLED	CONCERNED	UNEASY	PEEVED	PLEASANT	JOYFUL	HOPEFUL	PLAYFUL	BLISSFUL
DISGUSTED	GLUM	DISAPPOINTED	DOWN	APATHETIC	AT EASE	EASYGOING	CONTENT	LOVING	FULFILLED
PESSIMISTIC	MOROSE	DISCOURAGED	SAD	BORED	CALM	SECURE	SATISFIED	GRATEFUL	TOUCHED
ALIENATED	MISERABLE	LONELY	DISHEARTENED	TIRED	RELAXED	CHILL	RESTFUL	BLESSED	BALANCED
DESPONDENT	DEPRESSED	SULLEN	EXHAUSTED	FATIGUED	MELLOW	THOUGHTFUL	PEACEFUL	COMFY	CAREFREE
DESPAIR	HOPELESS	DESOLATE	SPENT	DRAINED	SLEEPY	COMPLACENT	TRANQUIL	COZY	SERENE

ENERGY

PLEASANTNESS

4 Ground your classroom discussions about the election in the values that you are striving to uphold in your classroom.

When candidates and people in office exhibit behaviors that conflict with your classroom values, that can present a unique entry point for you and your students to process that behavior in a context that you all share and are building together.

5 Proactively remind students that everyone is allowed to change their mind. Division and divisiveness run rampant during elections, pressuring people to choose sides and dig their heels in. As educators, we can support our students in pushing past this and embracing a learning and growth mindset. We are here to learn and grow: asking questions, deepening our understanding, and changing our minds are all powerful, healthy examples of that. Changing our minds does not mean we are hypocrites or insincere.

6 Offer affinity space when possible.

Being in a space with others who hold the same identities as we do can bring a much-needed sense of belonging, respite, and connection that supports learning and processing.

Additional Resources

If your students want to take action in defense of LGBTQ+ rights, share these resources:

- [Speaking Out for LGBTQ+ Rights as a Jewish Teen](#)
- [Seven Jewish Values for Social Action](#)

