



YMCA CENTER FOR YOUTH VOICE

STUDENT ELECTION JUDGE NETWORK

Election Official Toolkit

Tips for Working with High School Students

Even if it's been a while since you've been in high school or have had the opportunity to be around teenagers, you can relate to them as capable peers.

Do:

- Create a welcoming environment. Smile, shake hands (if appropriate) and maintain eye contact. Give your name and ask students what they prefer to be called.
- Set clear expectations about their role(s) for the day as well as the behavior you expect from all election judges (regarding breaks, use of phones, etc.). Explain how their role fits with the other judges and within the context of the election.
- Be sensitive to potential socio-economic differences among students. By design, teens try to look similar to their peers. Please don't assume that everyone has had the same opportunities and advantages.
- Take advantage of this opportunity to be a role model.
- Be yourself. Talk about your experience working with elections, as well as any other civic engagement you participate in.
- When possible, use language, examples, and analogies that students can understand, but don't talk down to them. Treat them like the capable, intelligent people you expect them to be. Avoid any use of gender, racial, or ethnic stereotypes.
- Wait at least 5 seconds for an answer after asking a question. Use as many open-ended questions as possible. Don't answer your own questions and avoid criticizing or rejecting wrong answers from students.

Remember:

- When engaging with high school students, they may appear disinterested or slow to respond. This is often masking the desire to not appear foolish in front of peers, but students still want to be noticed and appreciated.
- This age group needs to have fun. Students will respond to your enthusiasm, respect, and encouragement. Nothing is more important to the student than knowing that you genuinely appreciate their involvement.