Frequently Asked Questions about VERA 2016
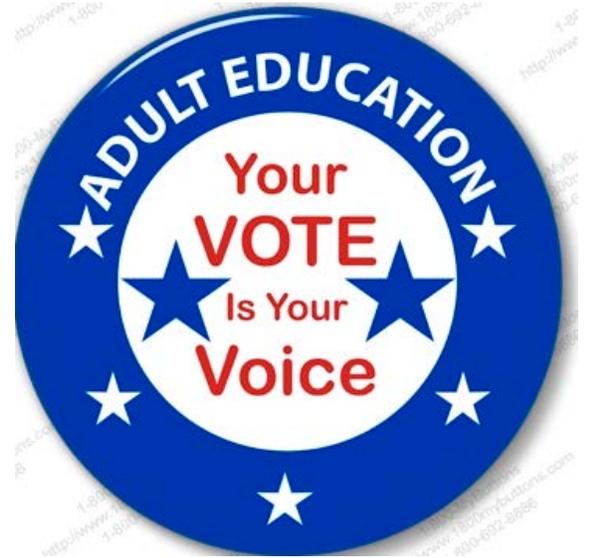
What do I need to know to sign up?
Sign up online at http://www.nelrc.org/VERA. Click the campaign button to begin the online registration process. You'll need to know the email addresses of the participating teachers.

Who registers our program online? Is it the whole program or one class?
Ideally we would like entire programs to join VERA, but we also welcome individual classes to join VERA. All types of adult education classes can join VERA.

Are VERA activities lobbying? How do I protect my 501 (c) 3 status?
VERA is a non-partisan voter and civics education effort and does not constitute lobbying. Please refer to the *Democracy in Action* issue of *The Change Agent* magazine**,** page 62, for non-profit 501(c)3 rules. The main point of the rules is as follows:
"In order to remain nonpartisan 501(c)(3)s must ensure the substance, form and context of these activities avoid any appearance of support or opposition for any candidate."

When should I initiate this campaign?
We suggest you engage the students you have right now in some way. They may not be with you by the time of the elections but they can still benefit from their participation in VERA activities.

I'm concerned about facilitating a discussion or debate on sensitive issues. How do I encourage a civic and productive debate?
Check out "Eleven Ideas for Making a Hard Conversation Work" in issue #22 of *The Change Agent*, p. 60, and "Moving Beyond Polarization: Some First Steps" on the following page in the same issue. (If you are in a state-funded program in New England, your state has made it possible for you to access The Change Agent for free online. Simply go to http://changeagent.nelrc.org/nelrc-member-states/, fill out the form, and hit "send." You will immediately see a pop-up window with your username and password.)

Establishing basic classroom ground rules for conversation with students can also go a long way to facilitating open and respectful communication across differences and disagreements. Here are some ideas:
- Ask people to listen when someone else is speaking and wait their turn to speak rather than interrupting. Some groups set time limits on how long each individual will get to speak.
- Agree to consider diverse opinions on the issue.
- Teach students how to use "I" statements and expressions that convey respect for the other person even if you disagree with their opinions.

- Ask people to speak to the problem or issue, and a possible solution.
- Have students work on developing a written persuasive argument before they do an oral presentation.

What information should I track?
Survey your students to find out:
1. Are you eligible to vote? (must be a US citizen, 18 years or older)   __yes ___no
2. If so, have you registered to vote?   __ yes ___no
3. Have you voted in other elections in the U.S.?   __ yes ___no
4. Did you vote this year?   __ yes ___no

How do I know if a student registered or voted?
You take them at their word! You can register students in class as a classroom activity. Check with your local Board of Elections about registration deadlines and requirements.

What about ESOL students? What about undocumented immigrants?
If you are surveying students about their eligibility to vote, make sure that the survey is anonymous. Avoid being specific about citizenship status if you think there is someone in your class who may be uncomfortable giving you information. To avoid confusion or misunderstanding, if there is a bilingual student in the class, perhaps they can repeat the questions in another language. Don't do anything you feel uncomfortable with or that might make students apprehensive. Just estimate the eligible and ineligible students with the information you have.

When and how do I report the information?
The program contact person should fill out the brief online survey after the elections on November 6. The reports are due Nov 30th.

What will happen to the information provided?
Your program's VERA data will be aggregated with the data from other programs in your state and throughout New England. This aggregate data will be posted for you on www.nelrc.org/VERA and can be used to educate elected officials and the general public about adult students as a noteworthy voting block.

Sign-up form: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VERA2016Signup

Reporting: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VERA2016reporting

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