yVote!: Helping Our Next Generation of Voters Be Election Ready

Beth White[1]

Abstract: *In Fall 2008, the civics education program yVote! was introduced; the program is aimed at encouraging high school students to vote. Over the last five years, partnerships have been forged with 27 public, private, and charter high schools and more than 2,500 students have been registered to vote.*

Program Description

In Fall 2008, Marion County Clerk Beth White introduced yVote!, a civics education program aimed at encouraging high school students to vote. Since then, Election Board staff has reached out to government teachers at Marion County's public, private, and charter high schools each semester. Over the last five years, partnerships have been forged with twenty-seven of these high schools, and more than 2,500 students have been registered to vote.

Once the school agrees to participate, teachers can either organize an assembly of senior students or invite Clerk White and her staff to teach individual classes. Clerk White spends about thirty minutes reviewing a presentation covering "Elections 101," which includes where we vote, who can vote, what is on the ballot, and how to vote; the curriculum is designed to invite discussion. For example, the students at Indianapolis Public School's (IPS) Arlington High

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[1] Now serving her second term in office, Marion County Clerk Beth White is the chief fiscal agent and record keeper for county's Superior and Circuit Courts and the secretary of the local Election Board. Before holding elected office, Beth worked in the administration of Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson, represented state and local agencies as general counsel, and served as a Deputy Prosecutor. She received her undergraduate degree from IU-Bloomington and is a graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center.

School were upset with the superintendent and felt like they had no voice in deciding who runs their school. During the presentation, the students learned they do have a voice—the school board hires the superintendent and voters elect their school board members. The students' frustration was turned into a teachable moment that voting is a way to enact change.

Often the discussion centers on the students' interests. Broad Ripple High School is an arts and theater magnet within the IPS district. The conversations there inevitably turn to arts funding at the local, state, and federal levels. After yVote!, the students made the connection that the best way to increase funding is to elect those candidates who believe it is an important issue. Local issues also stimulate conversation. In 2009, Beech Grove held a referendum election to decide whether or not to raise property taxes in order to provide bus transportation and technology to its schools. Clerk White and her staff visited Beech Grove High School before the election and found the students had formed strong opinions—both pro and con—and a spirited discussion was had. This special election was a learning opportunity for the students as they realized their vote would play an important role in the outcome.

Another important goal of yVote! is to encourage young people to be part of Marion County's student poll worker program. In 2007, the bi-partisan Election Board adopted a resolution permitting 16- and 17-year-old students to work the polls if they meet certain criteria outlined in state law (IC 3-6-6-39):
- Minimum 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale
- Permission from a parent/guardian
- Permission from the student's school
- Live in Marion County
- Attend poll worker training

At the conclusion of the yVote! Presentation, students are invited to participate in a mock election where they complete a ballot and feed it into Marion County's voting equipment, and, while waiting for election results to be tabulated, eligible students are able to register to vote. Eligibility hinges on whether or not students turn 18 on or before the date of the general election in November. In the spring semesters, however, 17-year-olds who will be 18 by November's election can register and vote in the primary election as permitted under Indiana law. Very few students and teachers are aware of this special provision and many are eager to register so they can vote before turning 18.

Warren Central High School is another great yVote! success story. Since 2008, Clerk White and her staff have visited all of Warren Central High School's senior government classes. While teaching every period makes for a long day, the students are engaging and well-informed. Clerk White makes it a point to tell the students that several of their teachers have either been a candidate or served in an elected office, which comes as a surprise to many. The teachers are also very supportive of the student poll worker program. A pair of brothers is a great example. One brother was encouraged to serve as a judge on Election Day in 2011 by his teacher; he told his brother about the opportunity, and he also signed-up. Both brothers successfully completed the work day and the Election Board looks forward to their continuing service.

Need
In 2011, former Chief Justice Randall Shepard and former Congressman Lee Hamilton spearheaded the Indiana Civic Health Index, an effort by the Indiana Bar Foundation to measure the state's civic engagement against the rest of the United States. The report found that Indiana

ranks 43rd in voter registration and 48th in voter turnout. While these numbers are discouraging, there is tremendous room for improvement.

County clerks and election boards are in a unique position to bridge the gap in civics education and be a local resource to education leaders in their communities. Marion County has received feedback from its voters—young and old—that they do not vote because it seems too complicated. After the yVote! presentation, many students say they feel more confident about the process and are eager to vote on Election Day.

Additionally, there is a real need for recruiting and retaining a qualified pool of poll workers. Many of Marion County's dedicated poll workers are senior members of the community, and their service is valued; however, Marion County must begin supplementing this talented pool with new recruits. yVote! is a great opportunity to encourage young people to participate. The students are excited once they hear they get the day off from school and earn a little money. After the students work the polls, they report that they enjoyed their experience and planned to continue serving because they felt they were giving back to their community. In the 2012 primary election, twenty-two students participated in the program and with the enthusiasm centering on last fall's presidential election, one hundred sixteen students worked at an Election Day polling location.

Cost

The cost to run the program is minimal. In Marion County, the material costs include printing mock paper ballots and reimbursing staff mileage to and from events. However, the contract between each county and its election services provider may already include the cost of additional programming of voting equipment and/or printing of ballots to use as part of any outreach activity. The most significant investment is staff time—to create and update the presentation, schedule events through teacher contacts, and visit each school.

It is important to note that a minimal investment in a program like yVote! can lead to great dividends. Marion County spends approximately $800,000 to $1 million to run an election regardless of turnout; the greater number of voters participating in an election equals a lower per voter cost and demonstrates the community's commitment to civic health.

Implementation

yVote! can be easily adapted to each county's election infrastructure. While most of the presentation content is applicable to each county, there are a few areas where the information may need to be updated to reflect each county's policies. For instance, Vanderburgh and Tippecanoe counties, among others, are vote center counties, but the Marion County presentation focuses on precinct-based polling locations. In Marion County, a combination of optical scan and touch-screen voting equipment is used while many counties, like Hamilton, use touch screens or direct-recording equipment exclusively.

Marion County's election services vendor helps code a mock election to use for yVote! and other community outreach events. Assuming each county's vendor will do the same, some time must be budgeted to build the ballot and code the mock election. Once the schools agree to participate, visits are scheduled before the voter registration deadline so every student who wants to register can do so and then vote in the upcoming election. Clerk White does most of the presenting, but this responsibility can be shared with Election Board staff and members. In fact, Republican board member PJ Dietrick has asked to present at his alma mater, Bishop Chatard, which is one of Marion County's regular yVote! locations.

yVote! Presentation

Be Election Ready!

Presented by Marion County Clerk Beth White

Types of Elections

- Primary Election (5/8/12)
  - Major party candidates are selected for general election
  - Voters <u>must</u> choose a partisan ballot: Dem or Rep
    - Non-partisan ballot only available whenever a public question on the ballot
- General Election (11/6/12)
  - All candidates appear on one ballot
  - Voters can select straight party or individual candidates
  - Recent change in state law moved School Board elections to November's election

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Types of Elections

- Special Election
  - Held in the event of an unexpected vacancy for specific offices OR certain types of referenda
  - March 11, 2008 Special Election
    - U.S. Constitution requires a special election be held for U.S. House of Representatives
      - U.S. Senate vacancies are filled by the governor
  - November 3, 2009 Special Election
    - Referenda election
      - 1 countywide question
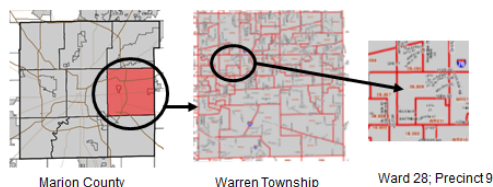   - 4 school district-specific questions

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Neighborhood Based Voting

- Marion County is divided into wards and precincts

Marion County   Warren Township   Ward 28; Precinct 9

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Neighborhood Based Voting

- Precincts: smaller subdivision
  - NEW! 600 precincts in Marion County
    - In 2007, Mayor Peterson reduced number of precincts from 917 to 590
    - Mayor Ballard signed new order in 2011 increasing number from 590 to 600

- Polling locations: where voters go to vote
  - About 290 polling locations in Marion County
  - Some locations contain multiple precincts

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Requirements to Vote

- **Do you have to be a US citizen?**

- **If your birthday is on Nov. 6, are you eligible to vote?**

- **How many days do you need to live in your precinct before you are able to vote in that precinct?**

- **If someone is serving a prison sentence, are they able to vote?**
  General Election Registration Deadline: Tuesday, October 9, 2012

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Register to Vote

- True or False: You can register to vote online

True: You can either turn in original paper form or apply online

State law changed in 2010 to permit online voter registration
- Register at www.indianavoters.com
- Must have valid Indiana driver's license OR state ID card

You must re-register every time you move or change your name

Re-Districting

- Reapportionment due to 2010 decennial census
  - State legislature adopted new district boundary maps in 2011
  - Many township advisory boards adopted new maps
  - New maps in effect for 2012 election
    - U.S. Congress
    - State Legislature
    - Township Advisory Boards (most, but not all)

**Election Info available online:
www.indy.gov/VIP**

Marion County 5th and 7th Congressional Districts

2012 General Ballot

Federal:
- US President & Vice President
- US Senate
- US House of Representatives (Districts 5 & 7)

State:
- Governor/Lieutenant Governor
- Attorney General
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
- State Senate (Districts 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36)
- State House of Representatives (District 86 - 100)

**Election Info available online:
www.indy.gov/VIP**

2012 Primary Ballot

County
- Surveyor
- Treasurer
- Coroner
- Superior Court Judge

Township Advisory Boards

Local School Boards

**Election Info available online:
www.indy.gov/VIP**

Absentee Voting

1. **Vote by Mail**
   - Must complete application first
   - Must provide a reason to vote by mail
   - Do NOT need to provide photo ID
   - Applications NOT kept on file
   - Pay attention to deadlines!

2. **Traveling Board**
   - Assists voters with disabilities or voters confined to their home

Absentee Voting

3. **Early voting**
   - Any voter can vote early
   - Available 29 days before election in Clerk's office
   - Complete absentee application on-site
   - Do NOT need a reason to vote in office
   - DO need to provide photo ID

Absentee Deadlines

- **Voting by Mail**
  - Application must be received by 11:59 pm, Mon., Oct. 29
    - Download at www.indy.gov/election or call (317) 327-VOTE
  - Ballot must be received by 6pm Election Day

- **Traveling Board**
  - Application must be received by noon, Mon., Nov. 5

- **Early Voting**
  - Begins: Monday, Oct. 8, 2012
  - Ends: Monday, Nov. 5, 2012
    - Locations and hours TBD

Voting on Election Day

- Be Election Ready!
  - Know where to go
    - Voter Information Portal:
      - Polling locations
      - Candidates
      - Current elected officials
      - Sample ballot
    - www.indy.gov/vip
  - Polls open from 6a.m. – 6p.m.
  - Bring Photo ID

Voter ID

- Bring valid, government-issued photo ID
  - Photo
  - Expiration Date
  - Name reasonably conforms
  - Government-issued
    - Issued by state of Indiana or U.S. government
    - Driver's license, Indiana ID card, Passport, etc.
    - Public school and university IDs

Precinct Election Board

1. What is a clerk?
   - Person you encounter first
     - Tell them your name
     - Present photo ID
     - Sign poll book next to YOUR name
     - Receive a ballot
       - Double-check for two sets of initials on ballot

2. What is a judge?
   - Answer questions
   - Provide assistance with voting equipment

Precinct Election Board

3. What is an Inspector?
   - Inspector is the 'boss'
     - Makes sure location runs smoothly
     - Troubleshoots issues
     - Sets up/breaks down polling site with help of clerks and judges

Poll Worker Qualifications

Inspectors
- Must be 18 and a registered voter of county
- Must attend training
- Must work a full day
  - Earns $110

Judge/Clerk
- Assigned by two major political parties
- Can be a student (16/17 year old), but must be a resident of the county where they work
- Must attend training
- Work a full or half day
  - Earns $70/full day; $35/half day

Student Poll Worker Program

- Permits 16 and 17 year-olds to work Election Day
- Requires 3.0 GPA (or equivalent)
- Permission from school AND parent or guardian

> Permission forms available
> at www.indy.gov/election

Want to work on Election Day?

- Inspectors
  - Marion County Election Board: 327-VOTE
  - Sign-up on-line: www.indy.gov/election

- Clerks/Judges
  - Marion County Democratic Party: 637-3366
  - Marion County Republican Party: 635-8881

Election Day: Tuesday, November 6, 2012

Voting Equipment: iVotronic

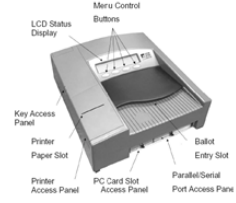- Touch Screen Machine (iVotronic)

Voting Equipment: iVotronic

- Specifically designed to assist voters with disabilities
  - Audio enabled
  - Braille buttons
  - Large buttons on touch screen
  - Asks voter to confirm their choices

  True or False: Only persons with disabilities can use this machine?
- False: Any voter can use this machine.

Voting Equipment: M-100

- Optical Scan Machine (M-100)

- Uses a paper ballot
- Informs voter if they have over- or under-voted in a particular race
- Tallies votes at the precinct

Voting Equipment: M-100

- Uses paper ballot
  - Voters darken circle next to candidate

  - Ballot can be fed into machine face up or face down

Want More Information?

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Be Election Ready!

Questions?

yVote! Ballot

MARION COUNTY yVOTE DEMO BALLOT

CASTING A VOTE: To vote for the candidate of your choice, darken the oval (⬬) to the LEFT of the candidate's name. If you make a mistake, return your ballot to the Election Official and obtain another. Do not attempt to erase any marks made in error.

"IMPORTANT! When marking the ballot, use a pen with black ink. DO NOT USE ANY OTHER COLOR."

WRITE-IN: To vote for a write-in candidate, write the name of the candidate on the line provided and darken the oval. A write-in vote will NOT be counted unless the vote is for a DECLARED write-in candidate.

STRAIGHT PARTY VOTING: You may vote a Straight Party Ballot for all the candidates of the party of your choice by darkening the oval for the party in the STRAIGHT PARTY section. Your voting mark will give every candidate of that party a vote. Then move to the questions and vote as desired

SPLIT-TICKET VOTING: You may vote a Straight Party Ticket by marking ONE of the party choices and then voting for individual candidates of your choice in any other party OR you may vote for individual candidates for your choice in each office.

PUBLIC QUESTION	PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES	FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT?
"Do you think there should be term limits in Congress?"	Vote for ONE (1) Only	Vote for ONE (1) Only
⬭ YES	⬭ BARACK OBAMA DEMOCRATIC	⬭ HILLARY CLINTON DEMOCRATIC
⬭ NO	⬭ MITT ROMNEY REPUBLICAN	⬭ SARAH PALIN REPUBLICAN
	⬭ GARY JOHNSON LIBERTARIAN	⬭ Write-in

STRAIGHT PARTY		
You may vote a Straight Party Ballot for the party of your choice by selecting the party of your choice below	**UNITED STATES SENATOR** Vote for ONE (1) Only	**TWO GREATEST PRESIDENTS OF ALL TIME** Vote for TWO (2) Only
OR	⬭ JOE DONNELLY DEMOCRATIC	⬭ BILL CLINTON DEMOCRATIC
You may Split your ticket by selecting the party of your choice below and voting for individual candidates in any other party.	⬭ RICHARD E. MOURDOCK REPUBLICAN	⬭ JOHN F. KENNEDY DEMOCRATIC
	⬭ ANDREW HORNING LIBERTARIAN	⬭ ABRAHAM LINCOLN REPUBLICAN
⬭ DEMOCRATIC		⬭ RONALD REAGAN REPUBLICAN
⬭ REPUBLICAN	**GOVERNOR** Vote for ONE (1) Only	
	⬭ JOHN R. GREGG DEMOCRATIC	
⬭ LIBERTARIAN	⬭ MIKE PENCE REPUBLICAN	
	⬭ RUPERT BONEHAM LIBERTARIAN	

DEMO BALLOT

VOTE BOTH SIDES