

2002

Destination Democracy: An Educator's Guide to the Activities

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Recommended Citation

Wade, Rahima C., "Destination Democracy: An Educator's Guide to the Activities" (2002). *Guides*. 50.
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DESTINATION DEMOCRACY



Kids Voting USA
High School Service-Learning Curriculum

An Educator's Guide to the Activities



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DESTINATION DEMOCRACY

Destination Democracy is the high school service-learning curriculum produced by Kids Voting USA. Through the lessons and activities in *Destination Democracy*, high school students practice the skills of democratic living as they learn important civic lessons in the classroom and participate in activities in their communities. The service-learning activities in the curriculum focus on meaningful civic involvement through voting, voter registration, working for political candidates, educating young children about the political process, and addressing community issues of interest to high school youth. *Destination Democracy* can be used by high school teachers, club advisors, youth group leaders and others interested in engaging high school youth in service to their schools and communities.

Why a service-learning high school curriculum? High schools are increasingly recognizing the need to involve young people in active experiences to help them acquire civic skills in their schools and communities. Combining service activities with academic skills and content in the high school curriculum creates opportunities for both meaningful community impact and important student learning. It is our hope that this curriculum will contribute to a revitalized democracy that includes American youth as informed and active participants.

SERVICE-LEARNING FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

High schools face multiple challenges...

Teachers in 21st century U.S. high schools know too well the challenges of effectively educating youth today. There are far too many high schools "where significant numbers of students are unmotivated, where unacceptable numbers drop out, and where those who graduate may not have even the basic skills needed for either higher education or the workplace" (Cawelti, 1994, p. 1). High schools have been criticized in several national studies as fostering passive learners who derive little meaning from their educational activities, do not see the connections between their school work and life, and who feel little or no sense of belonging to the school or community (Cawelti, 1994).

Service-learning energizes high school youth...

While no one teaching strategy will meet the needs of all high school youth, service-learning holds promise in countering the problems associated with apathetic students and a fragmented curriculum. Service-learning presents youth with opportunities to work cooperatively to meet real community needs and to connect their service with the academic curriculum. Quality service-learning experiences challenge students to use creative and critical thinking skills to solve real problems. The end result is a better community for everyone. In the process of serving others, high school students also begin to perceive meaning in their academic learning, develop bonds within the school and community, acquire leadership skills, and discover renewed enthusiasm for attending and excelling at school (Hill and Pope, 1997).



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Service-learning can work in the typical high school...

While U.S. high schools come in many sizes, shapes, and structures; the typical high school curriculum is organized into courses by subject matter disciplines in 50 minute periods throughout the day. Most high school teachers teach upwards of 120 students a day. How can even the most caring and committed teachers effectively integrate service-learning in their classes under these conditions? The Kids Voting USA *Destination Democracy* service-learning curriculum has been developed to encourage service-learning within the typical high school structure.

Multiple options give teachers many choices...

First, the Kids Voting USA *Destination Democracy* curriculum has been designed to provide multiple ways for high school teachers to include service-learning in the curriculum. Some of the activities can be given as assignments for individual students or small groups to complete for homework or as extra credit. One class or a school service club can facilitate others. Many of the service activities can be completed during out of school time. The school-wide activities included in the curriculum will work best when several teachers collaborate together to involve many students in serving the community. This wide range of options makes the Kids Voting USA curriculum suitable for teachers new to service-learning, those who have little time to invest in integrating service-learning in their courses, as well as those who have the enthusiasm and energy for more ambitious projects.

Service-learning activities support course goals...

Second, the curriculum has been designed to support the academic goals in high school courses, particularly government/civics and other social studies courses. This Educator's Guide provides information on how the *Destination Democracy* activities connect to the National Council for the Social Studies Standards (see pp. 10, 11), and the unit topics in a major high school civics/government textbook (see p. 9). Thus, busy teachers can easily choose service-learning activities that will most effectively enhance students' learning of course content.

Collaboration makes everyone's efforts easier...

Third, the curriculum emphasizes how key collaborators can share the work in planning and overseeing service-learning activities. Students are empowered to develop leadership skills as they share in the design and conduct of service experiences. Other key collaborators include colleagues, parents, and community members. As the saying goes, "many hands make light work." Working together on service-learning projects helps develop a network of support that can be useful for other school activities as well.

Quality service-learning projects can be simple...

Finally, the service-learning projects in the curriculum emphasize low-cost, doable activities that take place in the school and local community. Most of the activities in the Kids Voting USA curriculum do not require extensive financial support, expensive bus rentals for field trips, or complicated logistical arrangements. Many of the activities can be extremely effective with little extra effort on the part of the classroom teacher. The resources provided in the Appendix to the curriculum will also assist busy teachers in planning high quality experiences with limited time and resources.

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WHAT IS SERVICE-LEARNING?

Community service in public education has a long history in the United States. While the term “service-learning” is a relative newcomer on the educational scene (experiential educators trace it back to the early 1970’s), the notion of service in the school curriculum can be traced back to early 20th century educators such as John Dewey, Hilda Taba, and Ralph Tyler (Kinsley, 1990). Fueled by youth apathy, interest in service-learning has surged in the past decade through multiple calls for youth service and federal funding that began in 1989. With a wide array of service-learning programs now in more than 75% of U.S. public high schools, the task of defining service-learning is not a simple one. In recognition of the need for such a definition, however, a diverse group of educators nationwide formed the Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform. Their widely cited definition is the following:

Service-learning is a method by which young people learn and develop through thoughtfully-organized service experiences: that meet actual community needs, that are coordinated in collaboration with the school and community, that are integrated into each young person’s academic curriculum, that provide structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity, that provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities, that enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom, and that help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. (ASLER, 1993, p.1)

The federal Corporation for National Service, which funds K-12 schools across the country to infuse service-learning via state departments of education, has adopted a similar definition.

Service-learning:

- Is a method whereby students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that is conducted in and meets the needs of communities;
- Is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program and the community;
- Helps foster civic responsibility;
- Is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the education components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled;
- And provides structured time for students or participants to reflect on the service experience (Corporation for National Service, 1993).



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Whether teachers choose to incorporate service-learning in the curriculum as an individually completed homework assignment, a club activity or a school-wide project, it is important that the experience include the essential elements of quality service-learning (Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform, 1993; Giles, Honnet, and Migliore, 1991; Wade, 1997).

1. Preparation is key...

Careful planning involves construction of a timeline for the project, development of a list of responsibilities and outcomes, and input from all those who will be involved, including the recipients of the service. Preparation may also include setting up trainings and orientations for project participants, helping students brainstorm potential solutions to problems, and facilitating group building activities.

2. Collaboration involves teachers, students and community members...

When teachers, students and community members work together, they can create a project that is meaningful, flexible and in the best interests of all participants. There are many potential collaborators in any service-learning project; quality experiences include a diversity of participants. While youth empowerment is an important goal for high school service-learning, adult guidance, supervision, monitoring and support are essential.

3. Student leadership develops empowered learners...

While teachers provide important guidance in successful service-learning projects, students provide the enthusiasm, energy and ideas to get things done. High school students develop leadership skills and interest in community involvement when they play a key role in planning and conducting service-learning activities.

4. Curriculum integration enhances student learning...

Integrating service with the academic curriculum provides students with opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they are gaining in their school courses to real life situations in the community. When students see how academic knowledge is useful in their daily lives, many become more motivated to learn course content. Because we typically retain more of what we learn through experience than what we just read or hear about, service-learning can also increase students' academic achievement.

5. Service is the cornerstone of a quality project...

Service activities engage young people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good. True service is not the same as charity. More rightfully it is about solidarity, working *with* rather than *for* others to make the community a better place for everyone. Whether students are involved in direct, indirect, or advocacy activities; the goal should always be a more just and equitable community and world.

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6. Reflection brings meaning to service...

In order for students to learn from their service experience, they must engage in structured opportunities to think critically and creatively. Through discussion, journaling, developing presentations and other reflection activities; students can uncover their biases, develop new understanding of community issues, and deepen their commitment to the role of civic involvement in a democratic society.

7. Evaluation serves multiple purposes...

Evaluation of a service-learning project should help program leaders assess whether students have learned from the experience and whether or not their efforts led to positive change in the community. In addition, evaluation provides important feedback for making improvements to future service-learning projects. Finally, evaluation gives program leaders evidence to make a case for the value of service-learning in the school curriculum to students, parents, administrators, potential funders and community members.

8. Celebration is the icing on the service-learning cake...

Celebration and recognition of students' contributions are important means for affirming the time and energy students give to their communities through service-learning activities. When students learn new skills, take risks to reach out to others, and offer their hearts and hands in service to individuals and causes beyond themselves, it is appropriate to honor and appreciate their efforts.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE-LEARNING

The *Destination Democracy* curriculum offers teachers exciting possibilities for many different service-learning projects focused on voting, elections, politics and community involvement. Projects can be small or ambitious, depending on teachers' time and students' interests. Here are just a few examples from the curriculum.

In the first section, "Choosing an Issue, Making a Difference," students choose an issue of interest to them, such as school violence, teen suicide, or animal rights. After researching the issue on the Internet and conducting a community survey, students choose a service activity, such as helping a local organization that addresses their chosen issue or planning a public event to teach others about the issue. The final activity in this section of *Destination Democracy* gives teachers information about how to have the entire student body vote on an issue for activities throughout the school year, culminating in a Celebration Night for students, families, and community members.

In the last section of *Destination Democracy*, high school students work with elementary or middle school students to increase their interest in politics and their involvement in the community. Service activities in this section include creating a Destination Democracy after school Club, teaching lessons on voting and politics to youth, and convening discussions on politics and community involvement with children in youth groups. The culminating activity in this section of the curriculum involves coordinating a Youth Summit for 6th graders, through which the children express their concerns to the local City Council.



HOW TO USE THE *DESTINATION DEMOCRACY* CURRICULUM

Learn how it's organized...

As you look through the curriculum, please note the following features. The first lesson is on understanding democracy. This is a central component of the curriculum that provides basic understanding for all of the lessons and activities in *Destination Democracy*. Following this lesson, there are five sections to the curriculum. Each section is organized around one of the Kids Voting USA's five key concepts. The concepts and their associated themes are listed in the Table of Contents in the curriculum.

For each of the 5 themes, you will find the following:

- a) One content lesson - This lesson will give your students academic content knowledge about an aspect of the theme.
- b) Two preparation lessons - These lessons provide the students with background information on the theme and important learning for the service-learning activities that follow.
- c) Two individual service-learning lessons - These activities are designed for completion by individual students. They could be assigned as homework or extra credit options. Teachers could also have all of the students in the class complete these activities.
- d) Two group service-learning lessons - These activities can be completed by either a class or a school club.
- e) One school-wide service-learning lesson - This activity is a comprehensive service-learning experience that could include participation by many classes, clubs, and individuals in the school. An ambitious teacher with just one class or club could also complete it.

Key information is provided for the teacher at the beginning of each of these lessons. The lesson objective will help you determine quickly whether this lesson fits with your curriculum or the mission of your school club. The estimated class time will give you an idea of how much time is required for the activities during academic classes or club meetings. (Please note that additional time will be needed for planning and out of class assignments, including the actual service activities in the community.) Each of the service-learning lessons also includes descriptors to indicate the type of service involved. "Direct" is used to note service activities in which students work directly with those they are helping. "Indirect" identifies service activities in which students collect materials or in other ways meet community needs indirectly. "Advocacy" marks service activities through which students advocate for a cause, issue, or others' involvement in the community.

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Watch for the symbols...

The symbols used throughout the curriculum will help you quickly identify different types of lessons and important components within the lessons. The following symbols are used throughout the curriculum.



Content Lesson

This symbol identifies the lesson in each section that focuses on background knowledge and information that will reinforce social studies course content.



Preparation Lesson

This symbol identifies lessons that will provide students with important skills and knowledge for the service activities in the section.



Individual Service-Learning Activity

This symbol will point you to service-learning experiences that can be completed by individual students.



Group Service-Learning Activity

This symbol locates activities that are best completed by either one class or a school club.



School-wide Service-Learning Activity

This symbol identifies service-learning experiences that can be completed by many classes, groups, and individuals in the school or by one ambitious class or club.



Notes

This symbol assists the teacher in locating special instructions or helpful hints to make the lesson activity a success.



Reflection

This symbol marks the part of service-learning lessons in which students will reflect on and make meaning of their experience.

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Choose the lessons that will work best for you...

Do you teach an issues-centered or current events oriented course? Are the topics of voting, elections, and voter registration an important component in your civics or government course? Are you an English teacher looking for meaningful writing exercises? Or are you a Math teacher searching for real world applications? Are you the advisor of a school community service club? Depending upon your curriculum and your interests, certain sections of *Destination Democracy* might support your goals better than others. In addition, the third section on Candidates for Public Office is most suitable for use prior to a local election; the other four sections can be used at any time. The activities in the last section, Educating Children about Civic Participation, will ideally involve a partnership with an elementary or middle school.

There are a total of 41 lessons in the curriculum (one introductory lesson, five content lessons, ten preparation lessons, ten individual service-learning lessons, ten group service-learning lessons, and five school-wide service-learning activities). Choose the themes and lessons that best fit your curriculum, time, and teaching situation.

For example, you might want to do the content lesson and one of the preparation lessons, followed by an individual service-learning activity as an extra credit option for interested students. Or, you could complete both preparation activities and one of the group service-learning lessons. An advisor for a service club might want to give students the option to complete one or more of the group service-learning activities. Teachers of service-learning elective courses or those who teach at schools where service-learning is required of all students might want to involve many others in one or more of the school-wide service-learning activities.

Check out the charts...

The service-learning curriculum lessons have been especially developed to support the National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Standards and traditional content in U.S. high school government and civics courses. Check out the charts on the following pages for information about how the specific lessons and activities in the curriculum correlate with social studies principles and content.

Kids Voting USA, a nonprofit, nonpartisan grassroots organization works with schools and communities to enhance civic engagement among American youth. To learn more about Kids Voting USA, check out the website at www.kidsvotingusa.org.

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Destination Democracy Lessons Fit with United States Government: Democracy in Action by Richard C. Remy (New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 1996).

Democracy in Action Chapter	<i>Destination Democracy Lesson (p.)</i>
Chapter 1: Government and Our Lives	Democracy: What is it really? (p. 1)
Chapter 4: The Federal System	Act from the Heart (p. 6)
Chapter 8: Political Parties	It's Party Time (p. 34) Campaign Volunteer (p. 39)
Chapter 9: Elections and Voting	Community Survey (p. 11) Use it or Lose it! (p. 19) Voter Survey (p. 24) Get Out the Vote (p. 32) Campaign Brochure (p. 36) Campaign Issue (p. 37) Campaign Volunteer (p. 39) Election Newsletter (p. 40) In the Spotlight (p. 41) Candidates' Night (p. 42) All lessons on VOTER REGISTRATION (pp. 44-52)
Chapter 11: Public Opinion	Community Survey (p. 11) Voicing Your Opinion (p. 25)
Chapter 18: The Federal Bureaucracy	Election Judge Trainees (p. 29)
Chapter 25: State Government in Action	State Issue Watch (p. 30)
Chapter 26: Organization of Local Govt.	Voting and City Government (p. 22) Voicing Your Opinion (p. 25) Student Representatives (p. 27)

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***Destination Democracy* Lessons Fit with the National Council for the Social Studies' Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (NCSS, 1994).**

NCSS Curriculum Standard	Connection with <i>Destination Democracy</i>
CULTURE Cultural characteristics, ideals, beliefs and influences	Culture is an especially important aspect to discuss within the following lessons: Community Survey (p. 11), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Registering New Voters (p. 49), Rock the Vote (p. 47), Talking with Youth Groups (p. 59), Kids Guide to the Community (p. 61), and Youth Summit (p. 63).
TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE Understanding our historical roots, connecting past to present and future	Several of the <i>Destination Democracy</i> lessons include exploration of the history of societal issues and community activists. Focus on the historical aspects of the following lessons: Democracy: What is it really? (p. 1), Choosing an Issue (p. 10), Helping an Organization (p. 12), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Voter Survey (p. 24), State Issue Watch (p. 30), It's Party Time! (p. 34), Register Your Opinion (p. 44).
PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS People, places, and human-environment interactions, developing a geographic perspective	Geography and how we adapt to or change our environment could connect with the following issue oriented lessons (if an environmental focus is chosen by the students): Choosing an Issue (p. 10), Community Survey (p. 11), Helping an Organization (p. 12), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Issue of the Year (p. 18), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Election Judge Trainees (p. 29), State Issue Watch (p. 30), Campaign Issue (p. 37), Kids' Guide to the Community (p. 61), Youth Summit (p. 63).
INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY How people are shaped by their culture, groups, and institutional influences, meeting one's needs, development from infant to adult	All of the <i>Destination Democracy</i> lessons provide students with opportunities to reflect on their growing understanding of themselves as participants in their communities and democratic society. The following lessons place special emphasis on students' individual development and political identity: Act from the Heart (p. 6), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Creative Expressions (p. 17), Use it or Lose it! (p. 19), Voicing Your Opinion (p. 25), Register Your Opinion (p. 44), Apathy or Activism? (p. 53).
INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS How institutions are formed and how they change, what controls and influences them, how they influence people and culture	The following lessons are concerned with understanding civic and government institutions in our communities, state, and nation: Act from the Heart (p. 6), Helping an Organization (p. 12), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Student Representatives (p. 27), State Issue Watch (p. 30), Talking with Youth Groups (p. 59), Kids' Guide to the Community (p. 61).

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NCSS Curriculum Standard	Connection with <i>Destination Democracy</i>
<p>POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE Historical developments of structures of power, authority, and governance and their functions in contemporary U.S. society</p>	<p>As politics is at the heart of the <i>Destination Democracy</i> curriculum, this standard is emphasized throughout all the lessons and activities.</p>
<p>PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION Production and consumption, goods and services, wants and needs, the economic aspects of society</p>	<p>As with the People, Places, and Environments standard, aspects of this standard could be central in the issue-oriented lessons listed below. In addition, the last three lessons listed here could involve students in fundraising or managing funds during an event:</p> <p>Choosing an Issue (p. 10), Community Survey (p. 11), Helping an Organization (p. 12), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Issue of the Year (p. 18), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Election Judge Trainees (p. 29), State Issue Watch (p. 30), Campaign Issue (p. 37), Kids' Guide to the Community (p. 61), Youth Summit (p. 64), Educational Outreach (p. 15), Election Newsletter (p. 40), Candidates' Night (p. 42).</p>
<p>SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY Exploring the benefits and challenges of using technology and how people can best use technology to serve society</p>	<p>While students might use technology (e.g. Internet, e-mail, video) in many of the <i>Destination Democracy</i> lessons, they will definitely focus on technology in the following lessons:</p> <p>State Issue Watch (p. 30), Campaign Brochure (p. 36), Election Newsletter (p. 40), In the Spotlight (p. 41), Rock the Vote (p. 47), Register Your Opinion (p. 44), Learning about Voter Registration (p. 46).</p>
<p>GLOBAL CONNECTIONS Global connections among world societies, tension between national interest and global priorities, global issues such as human rights, health care, and the environment</p>	<p>Depending on the issues students choose for the issue oriented lessons, there might be some global connections that could be made. The following lessons focus on issues:</p> <p>Choosing an Issue (p. 10), Community Survey (p. 11), Helping an Organization (p. 12), Community Heroes and Heroines (p. 13), Issue of the Year (p. 18), Voting and City Government (p. 22), Election Judge Trainees (p. 29), State Issue Watch (p. 30), Campaign Issue (p. 37), Kids' Guide to the Community (p. 61), Youth Summit (p. 63).</p>
<p>CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES Civic participation, balancing rights and responsibilities, understanding one's role as a citizen of a community, state, nation, and world</p>	<p>This standard forms the basis of all the lessons and activities in <i>Destination Democracy</i>. This curriculum was designed with the ultimate goal of creating informed and active democratic citizens.</p>

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Organizations

Alliance for Service Learning in Educational Reform

One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001
202-336-7026

Close Up Foundation

44 Canal Center Plaza
Alexandria, VA 22314-1592
1-800-CLOSEUP
<http://www.closeup.org>

Constitutional Rights Foundation

601 South Kingsley Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90005
213-487-5590
<http://crf-usa.org>

Corporation For National and Community Service

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525
202-606-5000
webmaster@cns.gov
<http://www.cns.gov>

Learning In Deed

Education Development Center
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02458-1060
617-618-2136
<http://www.learningindeed.org>

National Indian Youth Leadership Project

P. O. Box 2140
Gallup, NM 87301-4711
505-722-9176
niylp@cia-g.com
<http://www.niylp.org>

National Service Learning Clearinghouse

ETR Associates
P. O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
1-866-245-SERV
info@servicelearning.org
<http://www.servicelearning.org>

National Service Learning Partnership

c/o the Academy for Educational Development
100 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10011
<http://www.service-learningpartnership.org>

National Society for Experiential Education

9001 Braddock Road, Suite 380
Springfield, VA 22151
1-800-528-3492
info@nsee.org
<http://www.nsee.org>

National Youth Leadership Council

1667 Snelling Avenue N.
St. Paul, MN 55108
651-631-3672
nylcinfo@nylc.org
<http://www.nylc.org>

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DESTINATION DEMOCRACY – EVALUATION

1. Please list below the titles of the lessons you used. Indicate your assessment of their effectiveness by circling one of the numbers following each lesson title.

	very effective		satisfactory		not effective
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					
Title _____	1	2	3	4	5
Comments _____					

2. Did you read the Educator's Guide? (circle one)

YES

NO

If NO, why not? _____

If so, how useful was the information in the Guide? (Circle one number).

very useful

somewhat useful

not very useful

1

2

3

4

5



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3. Did participation in any of the Destination Democracy lessons lead to connections with others in the school or community? (Check all that apply).

- ☐ collaboration with other teachers in my school
☐ collaboration with teachers in other schools
☐ connections with community agencies or organizations
which one(s)? _____
☐ connections with parents
☐ other (please describe) _____

4. In what capacity did you use the Destination Democracy curriculum? (Check all that apply).

- ☐ as a classroom teacher
subject(s) _____ grade level(s) _____
☐ as a youth group leader
which group? _____
☐ as a school community service club leader
☐ other (please describe) _____

How many students were involved? _____

5. What suggestions do you have for changing or improving the Destination Democracy Educator's Guide or curriculum lessons?

Please provide us with some more information about you.

Position _____ Number of years in this position _____

Age _____ Gender _____ Ethnicity _____

May we contact you for further feedback and information? YES NO

(optional) Name _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

PLEASE attach any publicity or related info on your Destination Democracy activities for possible inclusion in the Kids Voting USA newsletter. Thanks!

Please fax or mail to:

Kids Voting USA
398 S Mill, Ste 304, Tempe, AZ 85281
FAX (480) 921-4008