

It Counts!

Seniors and juniors learn the importance of voting

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When a high school student begins to look forward to senior year, being able to vote is generally not at the top of the list of “must do” accomplishments. Even if it’s a year to elect a president, there’s a good chance that such a momentous event will weigh in behind graduation and prom.



St. Joseph High School this fall may have swayed students’ order of priorities, however, as a concentrated workshop for seniors and juniors focused on the importance of voting.



“Young voters are such a powerful political force who can have a great impact on this year’s election,” said Katie Pool, director of curriculum. “With social media and new outlets so accessible to our students, young voters are much more educated about voting than ever before. We want our students to know that they have a voice and can be heard if they go out and vote. This year’s election is just the beginning for them.”

The workshop took place on a recent Friday when juniors and seniors were on campus, while freshmen and sophomores worked from home.

The day began with Vic Zitzer, SJHS Class of ‘72 and veteran social studies teacher, joining the seniors in watching videos on the history and importance of voting. He then shared his experiences of the tumultuous ‘60s and early ‘70s in helping shape his decisions on the candidates in the ‘72 presidential election, the first election in which he voted.

“I also wanted to remind our students that the U.S. Constitution is dynamic! We can change it to accommodate our needs. The brilliance is that our forefathers and framers knew that this possibility was integral to our survival.”

Zitzer used the amendments to exemplify his point.

“Our citizens can effectively implement change. That’s one of our goals as a social studies department: to help our Chargers become enlightened, responsible and engaged citizens.”

While the seniors were in discussions with Zitzer, juniors were guided by their homeroom teachers to complete activities of their choice. Their options included researching current candidates, watching a recent debate, writing a letter to a local representative or senator, or creating a ballot and registration card.

The most engaging choice, however, was completing an online survey (<https://isidewith.com/elections/2020-presidential-quiz>).

Students exchanged views in the classroom as they considered multiple choice answers to questions on such topical issues as elections in general, economics, transportation, social concerns, immigration, environmental challenges, the criminal justice system, national security, education, foreign policy, health care, domestic policy, science and qualities desired in candidates. At the end of the survey, what was reported back was a matching percentage between the students’ choices and each of the presidential candidates.

The sessions lasted approximately, an hour after which time the seniors moved to homeroom and the juniors met to hear from Zitzer.

“It only seemed appropriate to use our hybrid schedule for this type of activity,” said school Principal David Hotek. “It’s an important time in our country’s history, and we wanted to ensure that our students understood the importance of voting.”