

Talking Politics...With Your Children

Checklist for teaching kids about politics and the election

While you may want to avoid talking politics in social settings, the same is not true at home. In fact, children are witnesses to our most honest opinions on most matters, including politics. As parents, you are responsible for introducing the idea of politics and debate to your children, and launching their personal journey toward being part of the democratic process. No small task.

According to Claire Haas, Kiddie Academy's Vice President of Education, you can start by explaining to children that there are many different (and valid!) opinions on any topic you can imagine. It's important that children learn to respect others, especially with a passionate topic such as politics. This respect will pay off as they get older, especially if their views do not mimic yours.

Here are some more tips and ideas to talk politics with your kids:

That's a Party?

- For kids accustomed to candles and balloons, the idea of a political party can be confusing. Explain how each political party is a group of people that have similar opinions who elect a leader to represent them.

Investigate History

- To add some perspective, investigate historical debates and issues and discuss how they are the same or different than our current version.

Pick a Cause

- Children can have strong opinions on local issues, especially those that may directly impact their lives, such as school or sports topics. Ask your child's opinion about a current topic of debate. Encourage them to investigate both sides of the issue and discuss how the information changes or confirms their initial thoughts.

Provide Age-Appropriate Answers

- Younger children may simply want to know what an election means, in the most basic terms. Older kids will likely want more details.

Write a Letter

- Whether electronic or old-school ink and paper, writing a letter to a politician is a great way to demonstrate the democratic process, and the importance of sharing opinions. Most elected officials now have email addresses - you can find your local representatives by starting at [www.\(your state\).gov](http://www.(your state).gov).

Run for Office

- Most schools, including elementary schools, have some form of student government association. Encourage your child to get involved. They'll get a first-hand view of the election process as well as an understanding of working with a group to achieve a common goal.

Social Perspective

- Your kids may be shocked to learn that in the not-too-distant past, politicians didn't Tweet, have Facebook or appear on YouTube. Talk about how social media has changed politics.

Take them with You

- Take your children along when you cast your vote. You'll be setting a great example, and creating a fond memory for your child.

