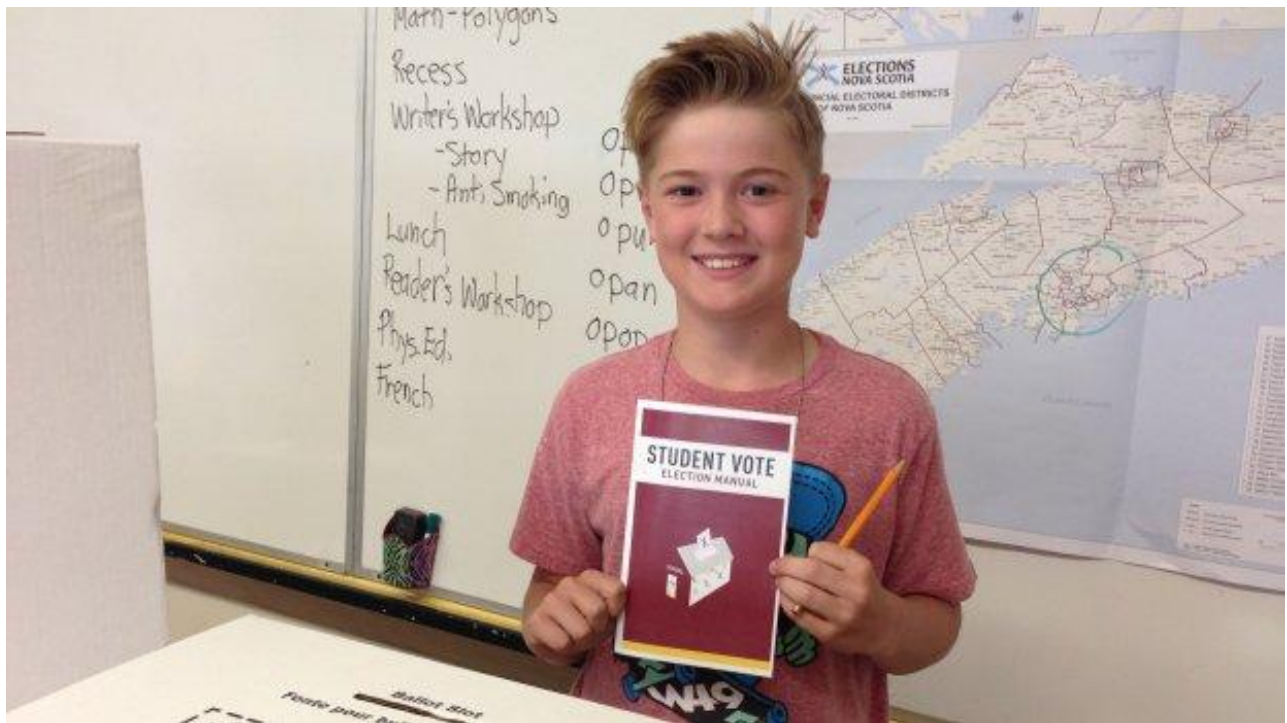


# Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017

## Final Report



**Prepared for:** Elections Nova Scotia

**Prepared by:**



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## 1.0 Background

### 1.1 Project Summary

Student Vote is a parallel election program for youth under the voting age, coinciding with general elections. The program combines classroom learning, family dialogue, media consumption and an authentic vote on local candidates. The purpose is to provide young people with an opportunity to experience the voting process firsthand and practice the habits of active and engaged citizenship.

Student Vote is the flagship program of CIVIX. This was the second provincial Student Vote project and the ninth Student Vote project overall offered to schools in Nova Scotia since 2003. The project was made possible due to financial support provided by Elections Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, the Government of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada.

CIVIX conducted a variety of outreach activities to encourage schools to participate in the project. Activities included communicating with the CIVIX network of teachers, direct mail to schools, phone and email communication to schools, as well as outreach to school boards. CIVIX also worked with the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union and Nova Scotia School Boards Association to share information about the project with their members.



Figure 1.1.1 – Photo submitted by Ridge diff Middle School

In total, 187 unique schools registered for the 2017 provincial election, representing all nine school boards in the province, as well as independent or private schools. The number of registered schools represents over 50 per cent of all high schools and consolidated schools in the province. A final registration summary report can be found in Appendix A.

Distribution of materials to registered schools began shortly after start of the official election campaign. Registered schools received activity guides, an election manual, posters, provincial electoral district maps, ballots, and ballot boxes and voting screens if requested. Each registered school received program materials based on grade level (elementary, high school or both) and language requested (English, French or both), and the number of students participating.

To complement the print material, CIVIX created a variety of online tools which were posted on the dedicated project website ([www.studentvote.ca/ns2017](http://www.studentvote.ca/ns2017)). These materials included the following:

- An 'About' page with background information on the Student Vote program and recognition of funding partners

- A *‘Teaching Tools’* section with online versions of the lesson plans, handouts and editable worksheets, as well as links to three motion-graphic educational videos developed by CIVIX in 2015 (*‘Government and Democracy,’ ‘The Right to Vote’* and *‘The Levels of Government’*) and slide decks.
- Background information on each of the province’s five registered political parties was included in the *‘The Parties’* section.
- *‘The Leaders’* section included links to videos from all five party leaders responding to five questions from participating students.
- Information about organizing Student Vote Day and submitting results, including a *‘How To’* video, the election manual and links to past results were included on the *‘Student Vote Day’* page.
- A curated collection of relevant media articles about the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 program was found on the *‘The Media’* page.
- Following the close of polls, *‘The Results’* section was added to the website, which offered the Student Vote results by province, electoral district and school.

Throughout the election campaign, CIVIX staff was in regular communication with the registered Team Leader at each school by phone, through email and social media. All participants received phone calls to ensure that the program was running smoothly at their school, as well as a follow-up email if they could not be immediately reached.

Nova Scotia students took on the roles of election officials and conducted a vote on or around May 29. All individual school results were submitted to CIVIX through a secure online system or by phone. In total, 18,963 votes were cast from 163 schools, representing 50 out of 51 electoral districts in the province.

Students elected a PC minority government with the NDP as Official Opposition. The Student Vote results were made public on the dedicated project site following the close of the official polls through a written summary, infographic table and the online results display system. The interactive system showcased results by party, results by electoral district and individual school results. The results were also shared through social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Party	Student Vote Seat Count	Student Vote Popular Vote	General Election Seat Count	General Election Popular Vote
Progressive Conservative	25	36.37%	17	35.73%
New Democratic Party	13	25.85%	7	21.51%
Liberal	11	26.17%	27	39.47%
Green Party	1	8.68%	0	2.77%
Atlantica Party	0	2.49%	0	0.41%
Independent	0	0.45%	0	0.11%

Figure 1.1.2 – Results by Political Party for the 2017 Nova Scotia General Election

Local, regional and provincial media outlets covered the campaign activities and shared the Student Vote election results. At least 59 stories featuring or mentioning the Student Vote program were published or broadcast by media outlets prior to and throughout the campaign, and following election day.

To evaluate the outcomes of the Student Vote program, CIVIX administered a post-election survey with participating teachers. Educators speak highly of the impact of the program on students in terms of improving knowledge of the electoral process, increasing interest in politics, encouraging political discussion with family and friends, strengthening civic duty and increasing their intention to vote in future elections. Educators also strongly agree that the program improves their own knowledge of politics and the electoral process, and confidence in teaching issues related to Canadian government and civics. All educator survey respondents said that they would participate again in a future Student Vote program, reflecting a very high level of satisfaction with their experience.

## 2.0 Participation

### 2.1 Overall Statistics

The overall statistics for the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 project were:

- 187 unique schools registered and received project materials.
- 163 schools reported results (87 per cent of all registered schools).
- 18,963 students cast a Student Vote ballot, representing 50 out of 51 electoral districts.

Outreach efforts proved effective and resulted in the participation of 53 'new' teachers that had never participated in Student Vote before.

### 2.2 Participation by School Type

As a percentage of the total schools in the entire province based on CIVIX records, the Student Vote program reached 33 per cent of all elementary schools, 54 per cent of all junior high schools and 53 per cent of senior high schools. CIVIX also attracted participation from alternative education facilities, special needs and home schools.

School Type	Total # of Schools	Registered Schools	Percentage of School Type
Elementary	239	80	33.47%
Junior High School	68	37	54.41%
Senior High School	64	34	53.13%
Combined Grades	46	29	63.04%
Alternative Education	17	4	23.53%
Special Needs	1	1	100.00%
Home School	2	2	100.00%

Figure 2.2.1 – Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 Participation by School Type

### 2.3 Participation by School Board

CIVIX worked directly with school boards to encourage promotion of Student Vote to their respective principals and schools. Schools representing all nine school boards, registered for the 2017 provincial election.

The school board with the highest percentage of registered schools was Strait Regional School Board with 86 per cent of all schools, followed by Conseil scolaire acadien provincial with 55 per cent.

With respect to reporting election results, the Strait Regional School Board, Eskasoni School Board and South Shore Regional School Board all had reporting rates of over 90 per cent.

The school boards with the largest number of student participants were the Halifax Regional School Board (6,553), Chignecto-Central Regional School Board (3,692) and Strait Regional School Board (2,400).

School Board	# of Schools	Registered Schools	% Registered	# of Reporting Schools	% of Reporting Schools	# of Ballots Cast
Strait Regional	21	18	85.71%	18	100.00%	2,400
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	22	14	54.55%	12	85.71%	825
Annapolis Valley	42	21	45.24%	19	90.48%	1,901
Chignecto-Central	70	34	42.86%	30	88.24%	3,692
South Shore	30	13	40.00%	12	92.31%	574
Eskasoni	3	1	33.33%	1	100.00%	76
Cape Breton-Victoria	50	19	32.00%	16	84.21%	1,798
Halifax	139	49	30.22%	42	85.71%	6,553
Tri County	26	9	26.92%	7	77.78%	801
Independent and Other	25	8	24.00%	6	75.00%	309

Figure 2.3.1 – Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 Participation by School Board

## 2.4 Participation by Electoral District

The Student Vote 2017 project reached schools and students from 50 out of 51 electoral districts.

The five electoral districts with the highest numbers of students participating were Antigonish (1,196), Hants East (1,116), Hammonds Plains-Lucasville (881), Dartmouth East (799) and Halifax Chebucto (715).

Statistics for each electoral district by can be found in the Final Registration Summary (Appendix A).

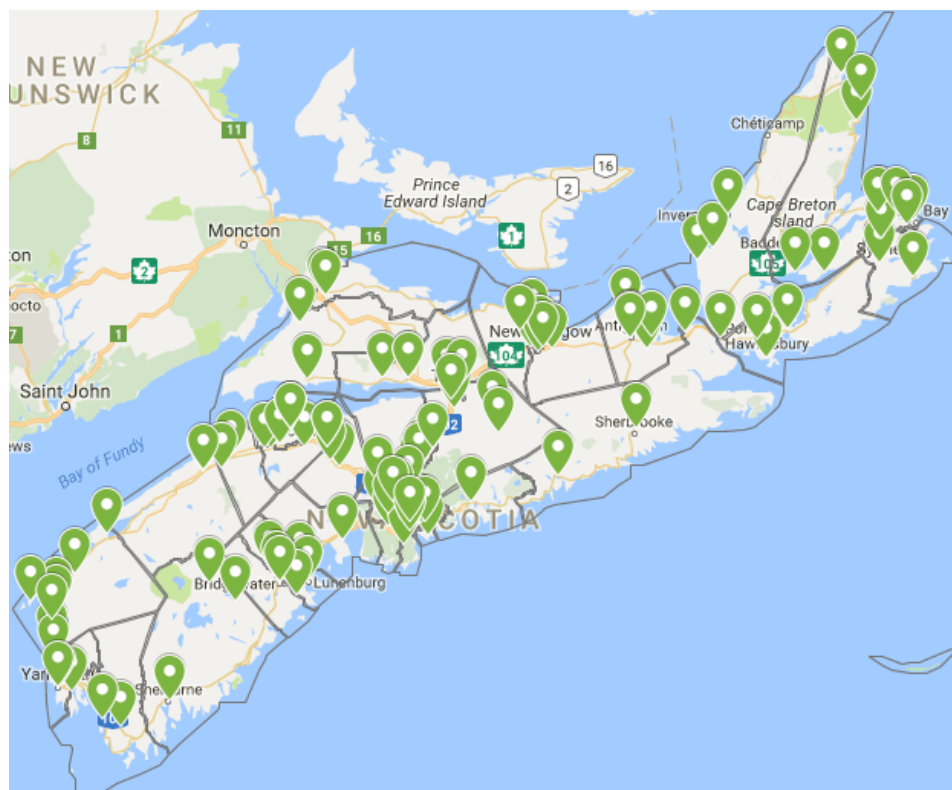


Figure 2.4.1 – Map of schools participating in the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 project

## 3.0 Project Support and Satisfaction

### 3.1 Engagement

Every educator that participates in a Student Vote project has the freedom to tailor the activities to their unique school or classroom environment and adapt it to their own timeline. Educator survey results indicate that the most common amount of classroom time dedicated to the Student Vote was three to five hours (56 per cent of respondents), while 24 per cent of teachers reported that they spent six or more hours in the classroom on Student Vote related activities.

The Student Vote program can also be run within one class or several classes, or implemented school-wide. As a result, usually more than one teacher facilitate a Student Vote project within a school. A majority of educator respondents (63 per cent) engaged at least one colleague to participate in the project, with 50 per cent involving two or more educators in their school. These statistics indicate that more than 382 educators were involved in delivering the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 campaign, resulting in approximately 1,676 classroom hours.

### 3.2 Materials

#### Print Materials

One of the hallmarks of the Student Vote program is that each registered school receives a package of educational resources to teach about government and democracy, facilitate research into the parties and issues, and run an election. The resource package included copies of the activity resource with lesson plans, an election manual to assist with the organization of the vote, posters to advertise the program, and ballot boxes, voting screens and ballots for Student Vote Day. Each package is tailored to their school level (elementary or junior/senior high school), language(s) requested and the number of student participants.

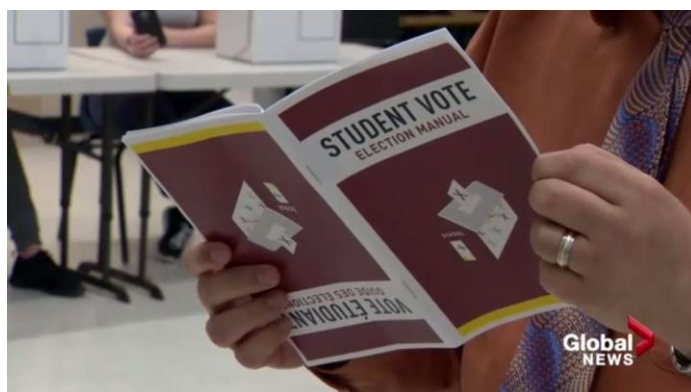


Figure 3.2.1 – Global News image of Student Vote Election Manual

In the post-election survey, educators were asked to rate each item they used based on a four-point rating scale (excellent to poor). Overall, the print Student Vote materials were very well received and over 95 per cent of respondents provided a rating of *excellent* or *good*.

The ballots and electoral supplies were extremely well received and over 80 per cent of teachers provided an *excellent* rating. Materials like these are unique to the Student Vote program and are difficult to replicate in the classroom without assistance. The students are captivated by the authenticity of the materials, especially if they also have the opportunity to view many of the same items in use by adults at a real voting station.



Many teachers often keep the ballot boxes and voting screens after the conclusion of the Student Vote program to use in classroom demonstrations between election periods or student council elections.

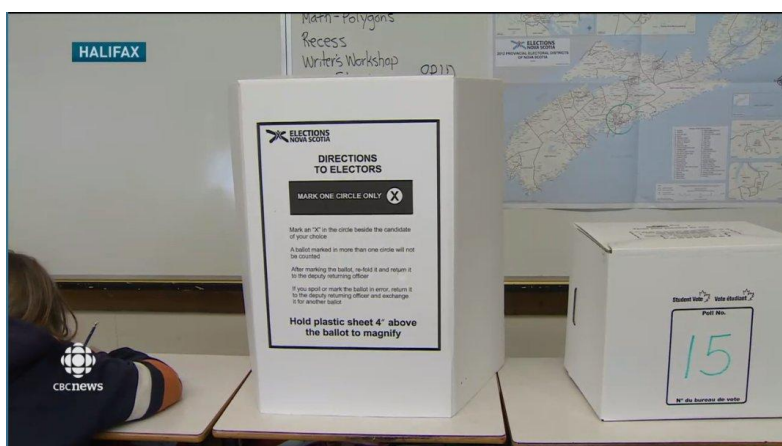


Figure 3.2.2 – CBC News image of Student Vote election supplies

The elementary and high school activity resources each garnered *excellent* or *good* ratings from 98 per cent of educators. The lessons were designed to be flexible and supplementary if teachers had their own learning activities planned, and therefore some teachers used all the lessons while others used select portions. Overall, teachers found the activities to be grade appropriate and well suited to the provincial curriculum.

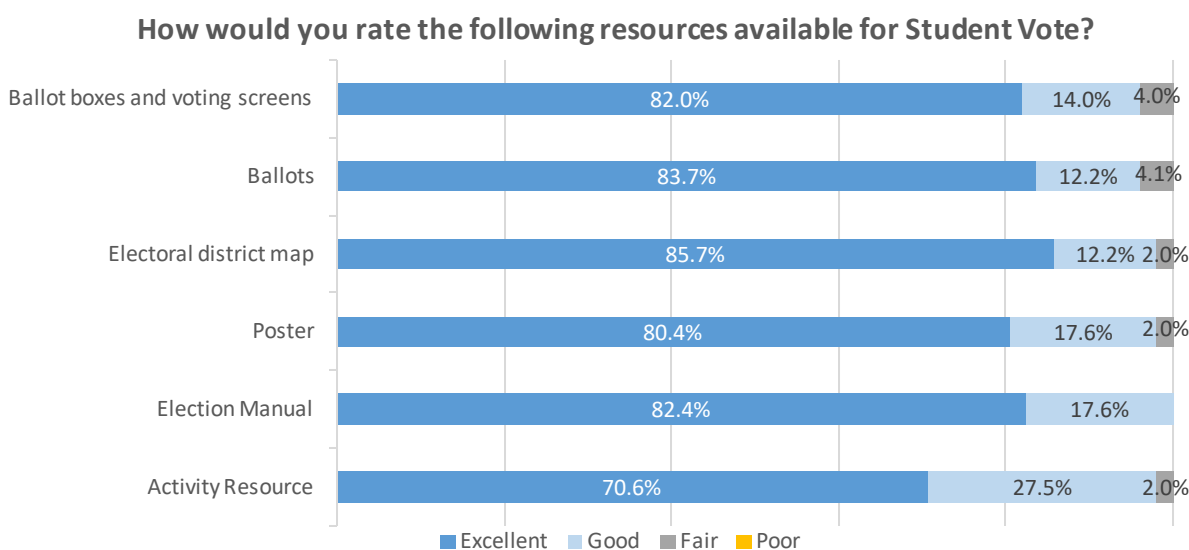


Figure 3.2.3 – Results from Educator Survey

“Please continue this program. The resources are invaluable to a classroom teacher that doesn't always have time to put these materials together.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

“The materials provided for classroom instruction this year are phenomenal. We are very much enjoying these activities.” (Juli Gillard, Student Vote Team Leader)

“I had one student love the posters so much he asked to take one home.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)



## Online Resources

A dedicated project site was developed for the 2017 Nova Scotia provincial election project. This site hosted the online resource library, which included the lessons from each activity resource, as well as the accompanying handouts and worksheets (in both PDF and editable Word formats), slide decks and links to other suggested online resources. The Student Vote Nova Scotia election website was well received and over 97 per cent of respondents provided a rating of *excellent* or *good*.

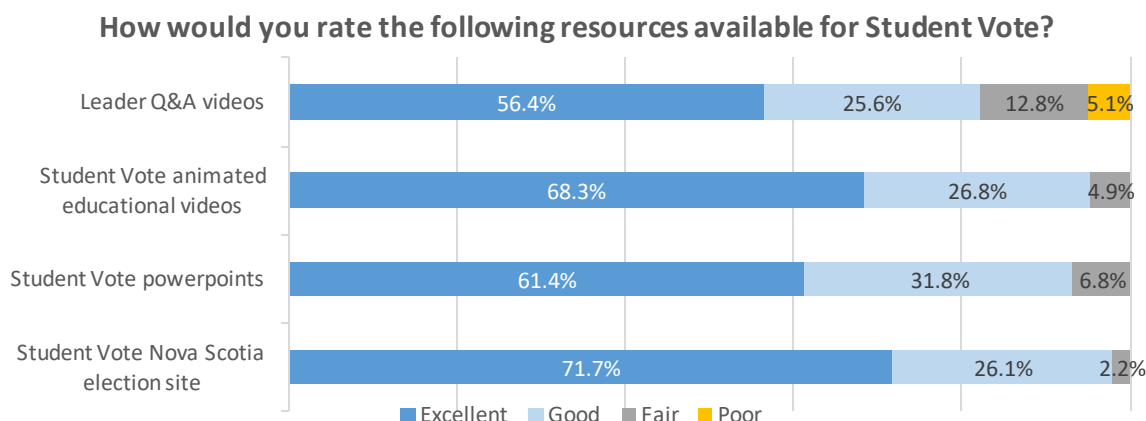


Figure 3.2.1 – Results from Educator Survey

A series of three educational videos with motion graphics were made available in the *Teaching Tools* section to assist with the delivery of key concepts and to illustrate basic types of government, the history of voting rights and the three levels of government in Canada. Videos were posted on YouTube and linked to through the project website. These videos used terminology intended for a high school audience, but were enthusiastically shown by many elementary teachers as well.



Figure 3.2.2 – Educational Video Screenshots

CIVIX also created 'Party Leader Q & A' videos specifically for the project. All registered Team Leaders were invited to submit a list of questions prepared by students, from which CIVIX selected five that would be posed to the party leaders. Selected students filmed their questions and submitted them to CIVIX.

The student questions were shared with the parties, and the leaders were asked to send their responses to CIVIX. Video responses to the student questions were received from all five parties.



Figure 3.2.3 – Students from St. Joseph's-Alexander McKay Elementary asking their question to the party leaders

Videos were first posted to the Student Vote YouTube channel and the 2017 Nova Scotia Student Vote project website on May 18. Although more than 80 per cent of teachers evaluated this resource as excellent or good, some teachers commented on the poor audio quality for the videos.

“The resources have been very helpful, especially the Leader Q & A videos!” (Damion Pollard, Student Vote Team Leader)

The website also included basic information on each of the five registered political parties that nominated candidates for this election, including the name of the leader, the number of seats held before the election, website links and a profile providing a brief written history for each party.

Additional resources were also included in the *Student Vote Day* section of the website to assist teachers in organizing their Student Vote day – including the election manual and the ‘Organizing Student Vote Day’ video.

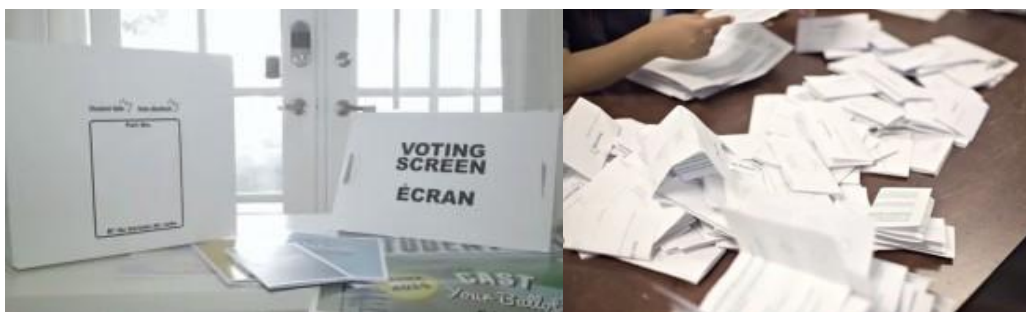


Figure 3.2.4 – Student Vote Day Video Screenshots

The *Media* section included a link to broadcast news stories and news articles about Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 that teachers could share with their students. A complete list of media coverage can be found in Appendix B.

The website also hosted the election results from the Student Vote results following the close of polls, including a written summary and the complete results, as well as a graphic showing the province-wide totals. The site is interactive, and allows the viewer to see results by electoral district or political party, filtering down to find more details at the school.

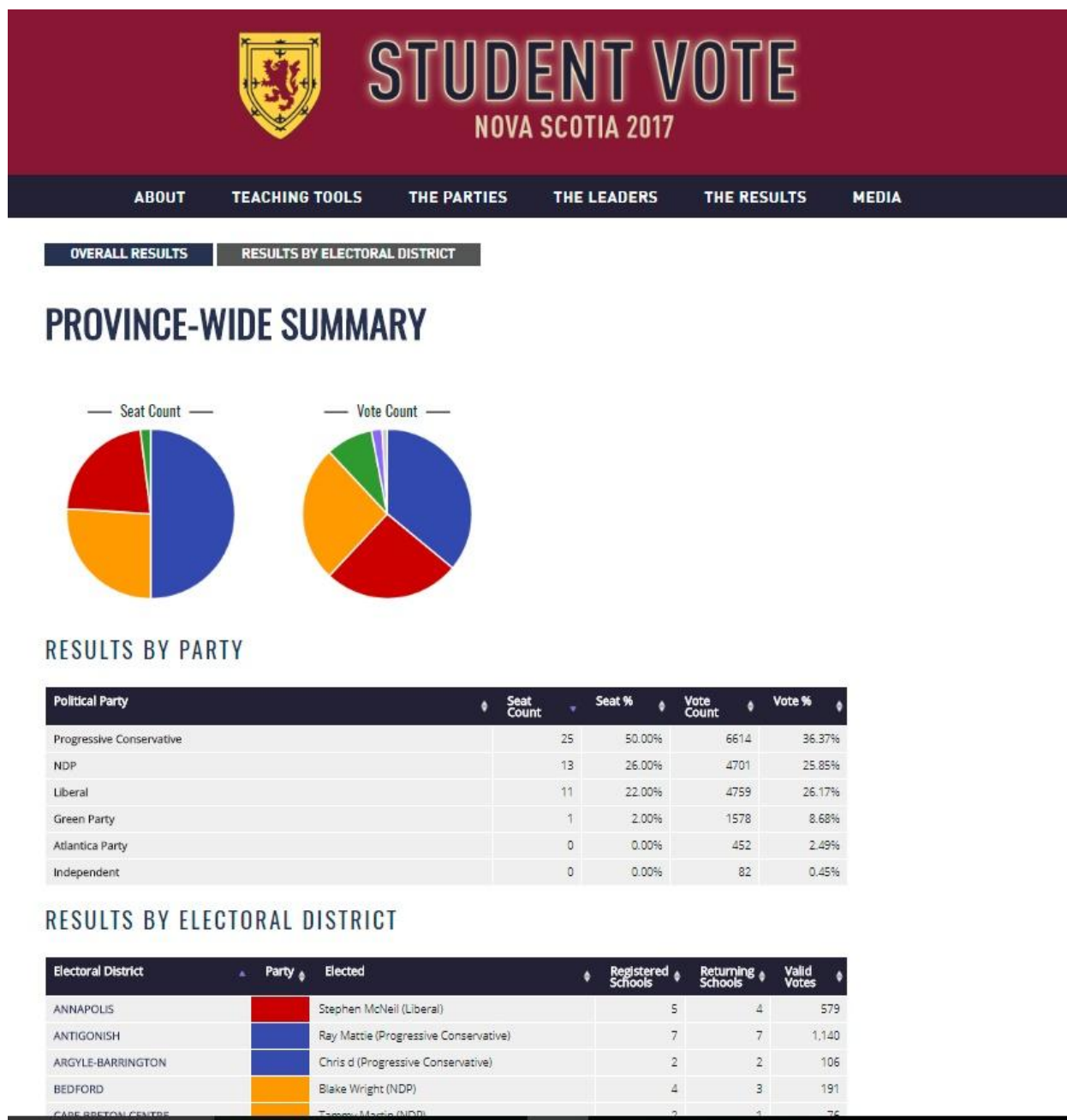


Figure 3.2.5 – Student Vote NS 2017 results platform

### 3.3 Support

#### Guidance and Communications

Much of the communication done by CIVIX during a parallel election program is to provide support and guidance to participating educators. CIVIX suggests media tools to use with students, provides updates on package delivery, reminders about deadlines and information about how to report election results. CIVIX also provides customized support to individual teachers by helping to adapt resources to fit unique environments, answering questions about various political and electoral processes, and supporting the finer details of Student Vote Day. Support also occurs in the form of troubleshooting when an error occurs, such as if an

educator registers for the wrong electoral district. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents reported that CIVIX's support was *good* or *excellent*, with 86 per cent choosing *excellent*.

"I know our teachers and students really enjoyed the process. Thanks again for the great communication, direction and speedy disbursement of materials. It really is a great program."  
(Matt Cohen, Student Vote Team Leader)

#### How would you rate the general level of support you received from the CIVIX team throughout the campaign?

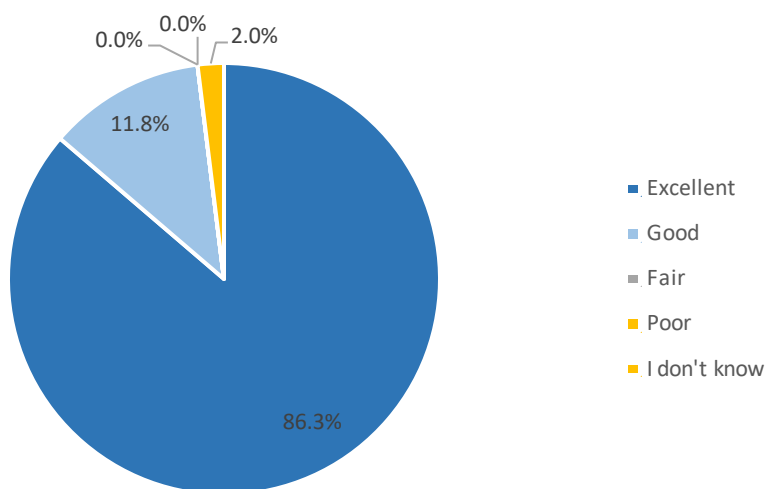


Figure 3.3.1 – Results from Educator Survey

### 3.4 Overall Satisfaction

Outside of the favourable comments and feedback, one of the best indicators of satisfaction is a teacher's intention to participate again. This loyalty reflects on the perceived impact of the program on knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as enjoyment among students.

One hundred percent of respondents said they would be likely to participate in a future Student Vote project. Specifically, all but one teacher said they would be very likely to participate. The teacher that said she was somewhat likely explained that it was because she had all the materials and thought that some of the activities are slightly too advanced for grade 1 students.

"It's so wonderful. I have nothing negative to say. Next election, I will make a strong effort to have a larger population participate!" (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

"Thanks so much, the kids loved the process and the experience. I think that many have learned something about their needs from government." (Lindsay MacLellan-McPhee, Student Vote Team Leader)

The kids are really enjoying the lessons! It is a very positive experience, especially being my first experience with the program. (Lisa Anne Morrison, Student Vote Team Leader)

Moreover, there is a clear trend that indicates that Student Vote is developing a devoted group of teachers who are deeply committed to encouraging a future generation of voters and engaged citizens.

## 4.0 Program Outcomes

The goal of the Student Vote program is to develop informed and engaged citizens and life-long voters.

The program aims to achieve the following student outcomes: increased knowledge about the electoral process, heightened interest in politics, increased political dialogue with family and friends, enhanced sense of civic duty and improved intention to vote.



Figure 4.0.1 – Student Vote participants

CIVIX supports educators by equipping them with the resources and support they need to deliver the parallel election project and facilitate the learning outcomes among their students. Teacher outcomes include increased knowledge about the electoral process, greater engagement in the election and improved confidence in teaching democracy and citizenship skills.

Program outcomes were assessed based on the results from a post-election educator questionnaire.. Supporting evidence is also provided in the form of teacher and student commentary taken from media coverage, survey data and email communication.

### 4.1 Student Outcomes

#### Knowledge

Voter participation research suggests that citizens who are more knowledgeable about politics and the electoral process are significantly more likely to vote.

The Student Vote program combines a variety of educational experiences to fully inform and empower the student voter including classroom learning, dialogue with family and friends, campaign events and an authentic voting experience. The use of experiential approaches helps to improve students' understanding of the electoral process and the real-life nature of the activity boosts their enthusiasm to learn.

Participating teachers confirmed the impact of the program on increasing students' political knowledge. One hundred per cent of respondents said the program increased their students' knowledge of the electoral process, with a strong majority (82 per cent) that *strongly agreed* with this statement.

“Several students shared their family conversations regarding the election - visiting the real polling station after we had done our student vote was a great opportunity to link this program to reality.”  
(Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

“(I received) positive comments from parents who had discussions with their children and were impressed by their knowledge.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

“We had a wonderful child led and organized party convention at lunchtime. ‘Vote for ---, vote for---’. They will never forget and I believe it will motivate them to become involved in politics and vote later in life.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

#### Increasing students' knowledge of government and the electoral process

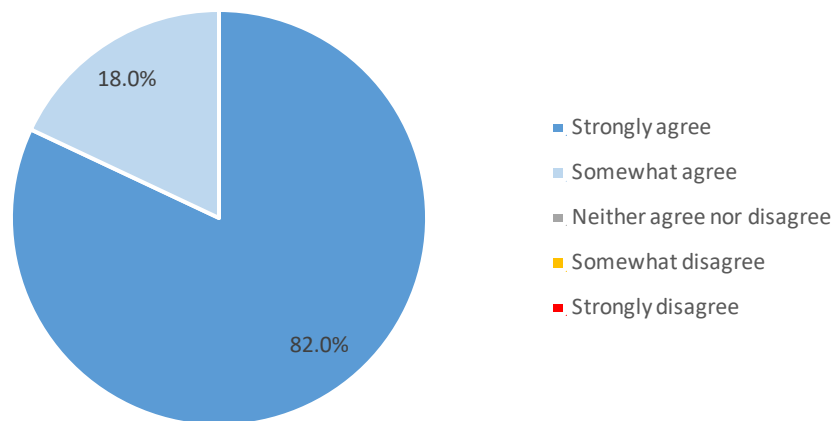


Figure 4.1.1 - Results from Educator Survey

#### Interest in Politics and Public Policy

Equally as important to political knowledge when developing an engaged citizen is cultivating an interest in politics and public policy. According to the results of the 2011 National Youth Survey commissioned by Elections Canada, there was a direct correlation between interest in politics and casting a ballot. It reported that 88 per cent of youth who were very interested in the 2011 general election voted, while only 28 per cent of those who were not at all interested voted (National Youth Survey, 2011, page 12-13).

The Student Vote program encourages students to discuss and debate current political issues with their family and friends. This dialogue, coupled with their newfound knowledge, contributes to developing an interest in politics and public policy amongst student participants.

Nearly 98 per cent of educators agreed that the Student Vote program increased their students' interest in politics and public policy; 60 per cent of respondents *strongly agreed* with the statement.

“My students we engaged and excited to participate and took the process seriously. If every teacher put quality time into a government and politics unit each year, we would have engaged voters after grade 12.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

“I really like politics; I get a little bit angry sometimes about it.” (Ella, Student, *Kings County Advertiser*)



### Increasing students' level of interest in politics and public policy

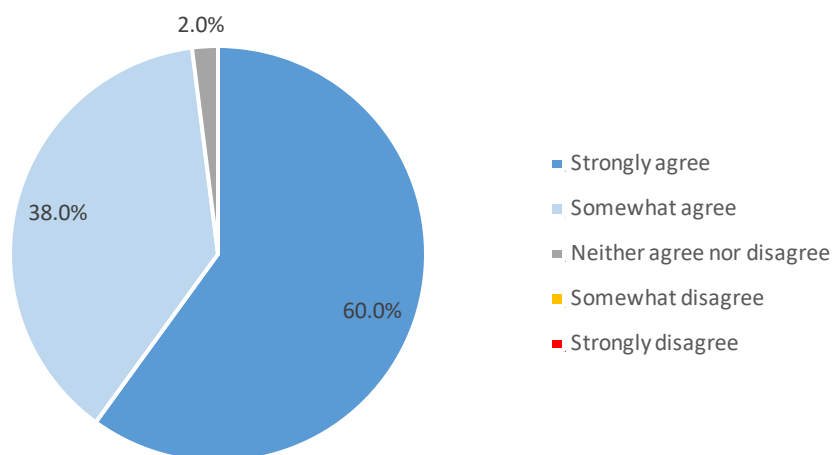


Figure 4.1.2 – Results from Educator Survey

### Discussion with Family & Friends

Family discussion about politics has also been an important predictor of voting habits. According to the 2011 *National Youth Study*, youth who reported that they voted were more likely to have discussed politics with their family both during the current campaign and while growing up.

The Student Vote program aims to encourage political discussion at home through recommended activities such as specific discussion questions, viewing the leaders' debate on television, sharing voter preparedness assignments or accompanying their parents/guardians to the voting station on election day. Outside of specific activities, students naturally feel inspired share their newly acquired knowledge about the election with their family and friends.

The survey results indicate that 88 per cent of educators said that the program motivated their students to discuss politics with their family (56 strongly agreed, 34 somewhat agreed). Similarly, 88 per cent reported that the program sparked discussions between students and their friends (44 strongly agreed, 34 somewhat agreed).

"My parents were absolutely thrilled that their children participated in the vote and they are in grade one! A lot of discussion was had at home at the dinner table and students were begging their parents to take them with them to the voting stations when they were going to vote." (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

"I had one student who told me about a discussion she had with her mother that resulted in her convincing her mother to vote for a particular candidate based on the party's platform." (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

Related to family engagement, educators were asked to assess whether students had a positive impact on adult voter turnout. According to the survey results, 72 per cent of teachers said that the Student Vote program contributed to students encouraging family members or friends to vote in the election (26 per cent *strongly agreed* and 46 per cent *somewhat agreed*).



### Motivating students to discuss politics with family

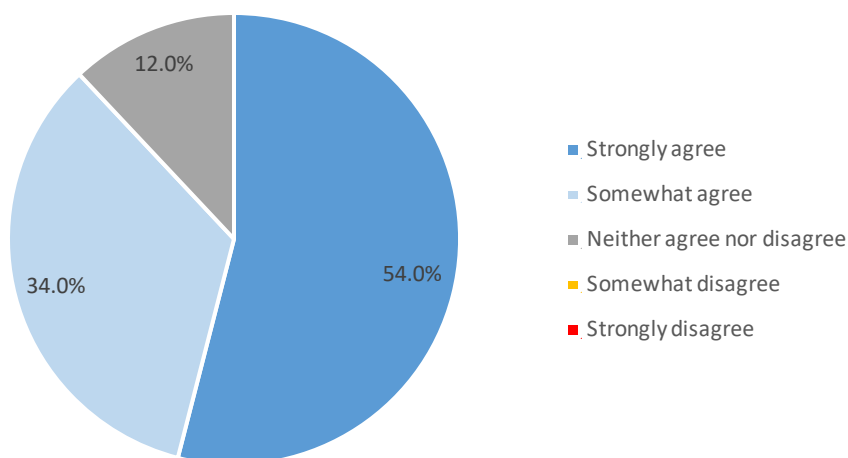


Figure 4.1.3 – Results from Educator Survey

### Motivating students to discuss politics with friends

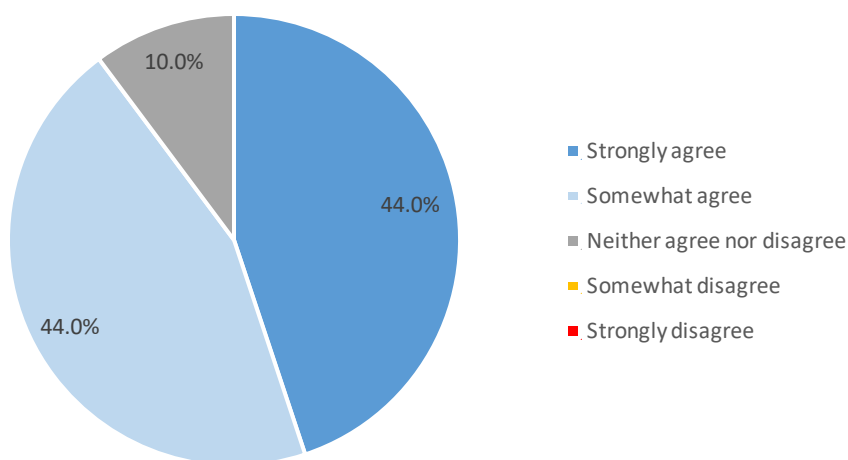


Figure 4.1.4 – Results from Educator Survey

## Civic Duty

Helping students understand why it is a citizen's responsibility to vote is an important objective of the Student Vote program and is crucial to developing a long-term commitment to the electoral process.

Ninety-four per cent of educators agreed that the program strengthened their students' sense of civic duty and responsibility, with 62 per cent expressing that they *strongly agreed* with this program outcome.

### Strengthening students' sense of civic duty and responsibility

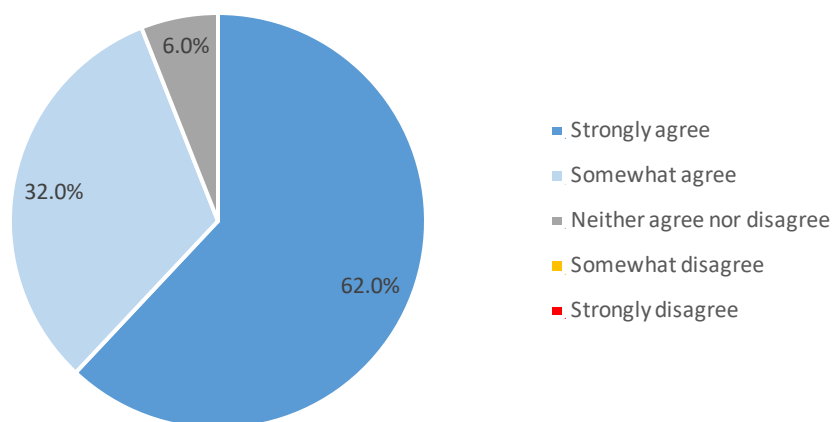


Figure 4.1.5 – Results from Educator Survey

### Intention to Vote

Educators were asked if they thought the program would increase the intention of students to vote in the future. Some students will not be eligible to vote for several years and predicting their future behaviour can be difficult. Nevertheless, 94 per cent of respondents said that participation in the project increased their students' intention to vote in future elections.

### Increasing students' intention to vote in future elections

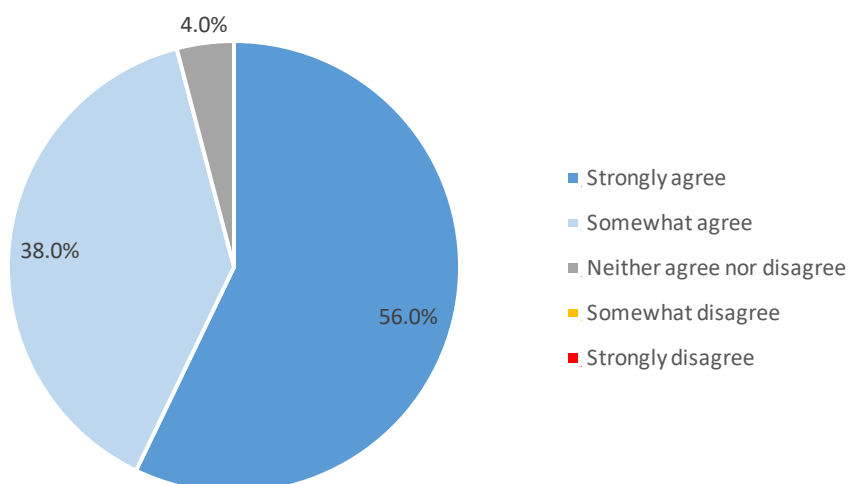


Figure 4.1.6 – Results from Educator Survey

## 4.2 Educator Outcomes

### Knowledge about politics and the electoral process

An educator that feels confident and knowledgeable about a subject will be better prepared to inform and engage their students. CIVIX aims to help educators teach democracy and citizenship with greater ease and efficacy by providing them with a framework, a variety of learning strategies, current and easy-to-use multi-media resources, and overall guidance. Results of the educator survey suggest that the Student Vote program is improving the capacity of educators to deliver democratic engagement activities and making a lasting impact on civic education in Nova Scotia.

A majority of educators (93 per cent) said their knowledge and understanding of politics and the electoral process had increased as a result of the Student Vote program. Some educators felt that this outcome did not apply to them because they had prior knowledge, past Student Vote experience or political involvement, which adequately prepared them to execute the project.

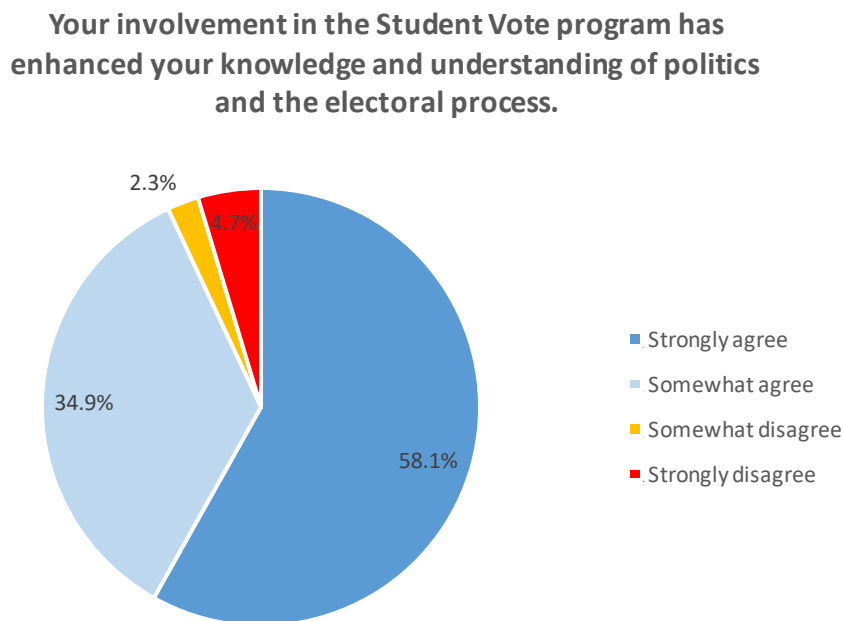


Figure 4.2.1 – Results from Educator Survey

The project also had a positive impact on engagement in the provincial election, with 93 per cent of respondents reported feeling more informed about the election as a result of their participation in Student Vote.

While these results are supportive of the quality and clear need for the materials that CIVIX provides to educators, they also speak directly to the need for more professional development for teachers on this subject matter in order to better prepare them in advance of Student Vote programming or other school-based civic education activities.

**Your involvement in the Student Vote program contributed to you being more informed about the provincial election.**

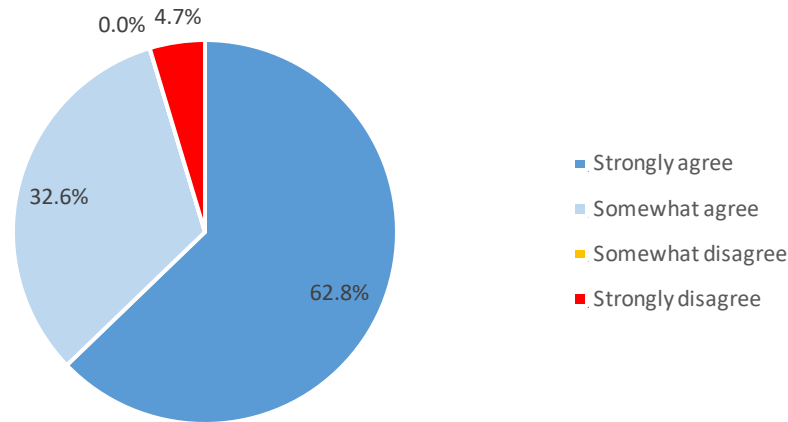


Figure 4.2.2 – Results from Educator Survey

**Confidence in teaching about elections**

Student Vote materials are designed to make the program easy for teachers to facilitate and flexible for a variety of different classroom environments. The set of eight lessons include background information, worksheets and handouts, and are accompanied by educational videos, slide decks and assessment rubrics, to limit the amount of preparation time that teachers need to invest in Student Vote. The election manual and electoral supplies make the voting simulation straightforward and authentic for students. As a result, many teachers find teaching about the election easier than anticipated, and their confidence grows.

The findings indicate that 95 per cent of educators reported that the program was effective in improving their confidence and capacity to teach politics, government and civics.

**Your involvement in the Student Vote program has increased your confidence in teaching issues related to politics, Canadian government and civics.**

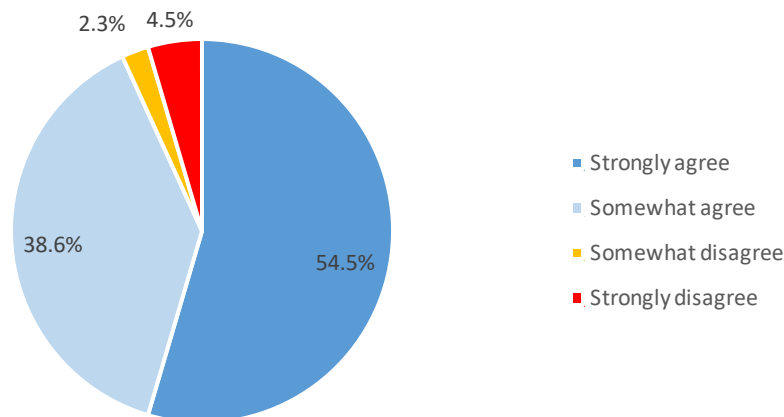


Figure 4.2.3 – Results from Educator Survey

## 5.0 Media

### 5.1 Traditional Media

Throughout the campaign, CIVIX was contacted by media for interviews and helped facilitate the coordination of many news stories. CIVIX used direct communication to regional daily newspapers and broadcasters, the distribution of press releases, and use of social media to attract news coverage in media markets across Nova Scotia.

When a reporter indicated their interest in visiting a class or speaking to participants, CIVIX reached out to schools in their distribution area that had agreed to be contacted by the media during their initial school registration or during Team Leader follow up communication. After a school's interest was confirmed, CIVIX facilitated a visit or interview between the reporter and the school.



Figure 5.1.1 – CTV interviewing Student Vote participant

In total, the Student Vote Nova Scotia project was mentioned in the media on at least 59 unique occasions. This includes articles appearing in print and online, as well as television and radio coverage. This number does not include the amount of social media and web exposure that the campaign received, and some television and radio stories that were rebroadcast multiple times.

Students and teachers were interviewed by media outlets like the *CBC News*, *Radio-Canada*, *The Chronicle Herald*, *CTV News*, *Cape Breton Post*, *The Laker* and *Global News*, with some outlets publishing or broadcasting numerous stories throughout the campaign.



Figure 5.1.2 – Student Vote students and teacher interviewed on Global election night broadcast

Both teachers and students found the media opportunities to be rewarding and great learning experiences.

“Thank you for giving me and my students the opportunity to extend our experience through the media interviews. It was very worthwhile to see a few of my students engage in the process in a different manner.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

The Student Vote results were broadcast live on *CTV News* and *Global News*’ election night broadcasts. The results graphic produced by CIVIX was featured on both networks, and students and their teacher appeared to discuss the project and comment on results on *Global*. The morning following the election, a participating student and her teacher appeared on *CTV Morning Live* to share their views on the election and the results.



Figure 5.1.3 – Student Vote participants on *CTV Morning Live*

The results were also published by the *Hants Journal*, *Kings County News*, *New Glasgow News*, *Shelburne County Coast Guard*, *Truro Daily News*, *Digby County Courier* and *Annapolis County Spectator*, among several others, and broadcast by radio stations such as *CBC News* and *News 95.7*. The Student Vote project was also discussed during *CTV News*’ evening broadcast the day following the election.

Links to all articles mentioning the Student Vote results were posted on the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 website. A complete list of media coverage can also be found in Appendix B.

Overall media sentiment towards the Student Vote program for the 2017 Nova Scotia election was extremely positive. Several Team Leaders and participating students expressed their positive experiences with CIVIX through interviews with local and regional media outlets.

“What has been the best part of the program is the conversations in the classroom and the conversations the kid’s have at home... about elections and about democracy.” (Neeta Kumar-Britten, Teacher, *Cape Breton Post*)

“I think it’s really cool they’re letting students do it so when they’re older they know how to vote and therefore know why they should vote.” (Darby Gibbon, Student, *The Laker*)

“I think it’s really cool that we get to take part in something [like this] — even though it’s not official. I do think it’s important to vote because a lot of other countries don’t get that right and it is one of our rights and we’re basically choosing who we want to represent us.” (Kaileigh Waugh, Student, *CBC News*)

## 5.2 Social Media

The Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 project received considerable attention through social media.

Beginning in late April, social media was used to promote program registration. Many CIVIX social media followers are educators or education stakeholders allowing messages to be seen and shared to relevant audiences. Additionally, messages from CIVIX accounts used appropriate hashtags (such as #nsed and #nspoli) to increase their reach in the province.

A [Google Map](#) indicating the location of registered schools in the province was also created and shared through social media, added to the CIVIX blog and made available in media releases.

Regular updates were made to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram throughout the duration of the campaign and to share the results. CIVIX had great success with these platforms and gained new followers, “Likes,” and channel views, and the content was viewed and shared by thousands of people across Nova Scotia and Canada.



Figure 5.2.1 – Tweet from Student Vote school

Notably, a Facebook post featuring the results infographic reached more than 11,000 Facebook users. Multiple tweets about the results were retweeted, favourited and shared dozens of times, reaching thousands of users as a result.

Through the Party Leader Q & A, CIVIX facilitated the production of 30 videos as part of the Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 project; including 25 featuring party leaders and five featuring participating students. These videos were viewed more than 8,000 times on YouTube. Most leader videos, particularly those featuring the major party leaders, received more than 300 views each. Many participating classes watched the videos as a group, so the actual exposure of the videos is assumed to be significantly higher.



To generate more exposure of Student Vote Day, CIVIX invited Student Vote participants to take part in a social media contest of the election process at their school. A total of 25 submissions were received through social media and email.

On election night, CIVIX created a [Storify](#) (social media timeline) to track some of the best social media engagement from teachers, students and the media.



Figure 5.2.2 – Tweet from Student Vote school

## 6.0 Overall Assessment

Student Vote Nova Scotia 2017 was a successful parallel election that engaged nearly 19,000 students from 163 schools throughout the province. While it was not the largest Student Vote project in the province, due to a variety of external factors, educators were very satisfied with the experience and spoke favourably about the impact of program on their students.

The following section addresses some of the successes and challenges with respect to the project.

### Outreach and School Engagement

A snap election naturally hinders participation as teachers tend to plan out their learning and activities well in advance and it can be a challenge to immediately change course or have time to repeat units completed earlier in the year. Furthermore, an election that occurs at the end of the school year can significantly impede participation as teachers are focused on culminating activities and exam preparation.

Another significant obstacle to teacher registration was the fact that many schools had already organized a Student Vote project earlier in the school year for the 2016 municipal and school board elections. As some teachers explained, they did not have the time to conduct another project focused on government and politics due to other competing priorities.

Lastly, an additional factor that led to decreased engagement of teachers was the labour strife which occurred throughout the school year. Overall, morale among teachers was low and some teachers even cited challenges in remaining non-partisan about the election and therefore they thought it would be best to refrain from participating.

Despite all these factors, CIVIX was able to recruit 187 teachers to lead the program at their school, representing 42 per cent of all schools in the province.

On a positive note, CIVIX recruited 53 'new' teachers, in which this was their first Student Vote program. This suggests that outreach efforts were successful in increasing awareness about Student Vote and expanding the network of teachers in the province, which will hopefully lead to greater participation in the future.

### Materials and Distribution

Teachers provided very favourable evaluations and comments regarding the resources provided, including activity resources and posters to videos and slide decks. For each election, the CIVIX team updates its resources with new activity ideas and feedback from teachers, and the positive feedback helps validate this work and continuous improvement.

The Leader Q&A videos were well received but there were a couple comments regarding poor audio. Due to budget constraints and scheduling challenges, CIVIX asked the schools and parties to film their own videos. While this is efficient, it does not always produce the best quality video production. In the future, CIVIX would like to invest money into video development to improve the quality.

With respect to distribution, CIVIX worked closely with Elections Nova Scotia to get the materials printed immediately once the election was called. Working with short timelines can be challenging but everything came together quickly and the first round of packages was shipped out within 5 days of the election being

called. If possible, it may be helpful to have the materials printed and stored in advance in order to get the materials shipped out even faster.

The Government of Nova Scotia permitted CIVIX to work out the Book Bureau again, and it was extremely helpful in getting our operations up and running quickly. This is particularly important in a snap election scenario.

### Student Vote Day and Results

All of the operations and communications with respect to Student Vote went very well and there were no issues or challenges faced. Given the timing of the election, CIVIX was pleased with the voter turnout among schools. In the end 87 per cent of schools reported results. This reflects well on the communications and support provided by CIVIX.

Overall, CIVIX was able to garner good media coverage of the project and coordinate the broadcast and publication of results. Overall the number of media hits more than doubled compared to the 2013 provincial election (59 media hits in 2017 compared to 27 media hits in 2013). *Global News* and *CTV* broadcast the results on election night and *CTV Morning Live* had kids on their show to discuss the results. Unfortunately, CBC was not interested in highlighting the results on their televised election coverage despite repeated attempts to engage them.

### Final Quotes from Participants

“This program is very well done and very beneficial to a classroom teacher. Thank you.” (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)

“This has been a great program for my students. I have participated from the moment it started, and it has been a rewarding experience. Comments from colleagues, parents and students have all been positive. I will be retiring in a few weeks, and I want to take this opportunity to thank CIVIX for offering this program! (Educator, Post-Election Questionnaire)