

Growing Active Citizens



Increasing Understanding

Enhancing Participation

Building Stronger Communities

Local Government New Zealand, together with a number of local and central government partners, has embarked on a long term project with the aim of "Growing Active Citizens".

What does the Growing Active Citizens project aim to achieve?

The long-term objective of this project is to increase active participation in local communities, local government, and other decision-making processes. This project focuses on developing resources for use in New Zealand schools. This material will help young people to understand how decisions are made in their communities and encourage their active engagement with local government. The project will also provide resources to support the engagement of councils with students, children and young people in their communities.

Starting young is important. For instance, research indicates that those who do not vote in their youth are less likely to vote in their later adult life, while those who vote early on continue to vote throughout their lives. There is good evidence that programmes which foster future participation are those which give students an experience of participating in democratic systems. Results from our Kids Voting programme in 2008 and 2009 show an increase in the number of students who believe elections are easy to understand and voting makes a difference.

Over many years, councils and schools have developed their own resources to support Growing Active Citizens in their communities. These resources aim to provide individuals with the knowledge, understanding and confidence they need to participate effectively in democratic processes. This project will build on these existing resources to help New Zealand councils and schools support active citizenship and the participation of children and young people in decision-making processes.

What has been achieved to date?

Kids Voting is an opportunity for the voters and leaders of the future to better understand the voting process. Over 13,000 students took part in Kids Voting in conjunction with the 2008 Parliamentary Elections. This followed the successful launch of Kids Voting for the 2007 local government elections where 8,000 children experienced the chance to vote for their mayors and councillors. The Kids Voting programme will run every year and continue to raise awareness among young people about New Zealand's electoral processes. For more information, or to register your school or council to take part, visit www.kidsvoting.org.nz

Youth Citizens' Juries: A Guide to Setting up and Running a Youth Citizens' Jury is a resource for schools and councils. Youth Juries provide a unique opportunity for young people to be included in decision-making and participate in the political processes of their community. The guide and associated DVD will support schools and councils to run this unique consultation and decision-making process for young people in their area.

A number of other projects are currently being planned and will be made available during 2009.

How can you be involved?

You can get involved in this project in a number of ways:

- visit www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/SocialandCommunityIssues/ and click on Growing Active Citizens or www.kidsvoting.org.nz
- email info@lgnz.co.nz or info@kidsvoting.org.nz to join the group
- councils and schools can work together on Kids Voting 2009 or a Youth Citizens' Jury.

Growing Active Citizens is coordinated by *Local Government New Zealand*, in association with local and central government agencies, and educational institutions,

114-118 Lambton Quay, Wellington 6011
PO Box 1214, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
P: 64 4 924 1200, F: 64 4 924 1230 www.lgnz.co.nz



Local Government New Zealand
te pūtakehi matakōkiri