

Talking to your kids about the election

READY TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THE ELECTION?



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irector of communications and administration

“Teachable moments.” That is the phrase I keep repeating to myself every time we address the upcoming election with my two children, ages 10 and 12.

Whether it’s a candidate’s position on issues or a scandal that’s making headlines, the election has provided our family with an abundance of topics for family conversations. My husband and I decided to embrace these opportunities to teach our kids about the political process, local and national issues, and how it all ties into our family values.

Here’s a few guidelines we used to help us decide what issues to tackle and how to handle it.

1. **Will they hear about it at school?**

In our family, this is usually the first question we ask ourselves. When there is “breaking news” or

particularly controversial issues, we want to talk to our kids about it before they hear about it from their friends. Not only can we give them correct information, it gives our kids a chance to ask questions.

2. **How do we make this age appropriate?**

Parents need to decide for themselves what is appropriate for their children to hear. We use the opportunity to have an age-appropriate conversation so they have a basic understanding of the issue (without too many details).

3. **Can we deliver this message in a fair and non-partisan way?**

We want our kids to grow up to be independent thinkers with a desire to learn all sides of an issue. While our children know which candidates we support, my husband and I have intentionally tried to be non-partisan in conversations about the election. This also is a great chance to reinforce the value of respect and tolerance of other people's perspectives.

4. **How does this align with our family values?**

We always try to tie conversations back to our family values. (In our house, we use the Six Pillars of Character – trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.) We talk about how our values influence the candidates we support and the issues we care about most. And just as importantly, we talk about how other people's opinions are guided by their own values and are as justified as our own.

Ultimately, we hope that our family discussions teach our kids how to have meaningful conversations about important issues. Amidst what could be the most uncivil election in our nation's history, it's a great goal for the rest of us, too.



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She lives in Iowa with her husband, 10 year-old daughter and 12 year-old son.

Click [here](#) for more information on character education.