



# From Screens to Ballots: The Influence of Social Media in Shaping Students' Views on the 2028 Elections

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## Abstract

## Review Article

Digital platforms have increasingly replaced traditional media as the primary source of political socialization for Generation Z. While students exhibit high levels of political awareness, a persistent "literacy gap" leaves them vulnerable to sophisticated misinformation. This study assessed the influence of social media on the political perspectives and voting intentions of 256 Senior High School students in Cabarroguis District, Quirino, for the 2028 elections. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational quantitative design, participants were selected from three public high schools through systematic sampling. Data were gathered using a pilot-tested, 4-point Likert scale survey and analyzed via t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis. Findings indicate high digital immersion, with 44.53% of respondents spending 2–4 hours daily on social media, primarily utilizing Facebook (75.39%) and TikTok (30.86%) for information. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ( $r = 0.423, p < .001$ ) between social media engagement and voting intentions. While sex, age, and ethnicity showed no significant impact, socioeconomic status significantly influenced exposure levels ( $p = .033$ ). Grade 12 students demonstrated higher critical thinking in opinion formation compared to Grade 11 ( $p = .029$ ), suggesting a developmental shift as they near voting age. The results highlight that social media acts as an "ideological maze" shaping future voters. Consequently, schools must integrate critical digital literacy and values-driven civic education to ensure informed electoral participation.

**Keywords:** Political Socialization, Social Media Influence, Generation Z, Voting Intentions, Digital Literacy, 2028 Elections.

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## Introduction

In our technologically advanced world, social media has become a primary driver of political engagement, fostering essential awareness and civic participation among the youth (Oden & Porter, 2023). International studies repeatedly show that social media has a substantial impact on how young people participate in politics, often outweighing

traditional factors such as family wealth and formal civic education (Bolqiah, 2025; Oden & Porter, 2023). The widespread availability of networked digital settings helps level the political playing field, enabling disenfranchised young people more access to political conversations and action (Oden & Porter, 2023). Success in modern democracy increasingly depends on the ability of citizens to navigate what



has been described as a unique "ideological maze" that influences student viewpoints (Bolqiah, 2025).

However, despite high levels of exposure, a critical literacy gap remains. While digital natives are constantly immersed in online content, they often lack the robust critical thinking skills necessary to filter sophisticated misinformation and strategically manufactured narratives (Ahmad et al., 2024; Peter & Muth, 2023). In the Philippines, where over 81% of the youth rely on social media for news, this lack of critical discernment poses a significant risk to electoral integrity. Preliminary research among students in the Cabarroguis District echoes these concerns, showing that while students are highly active online, their susceptibility to "snackable" digital rhetoric remains a challenge.

To address this, there is a need for a deeper understanding of how digital consumption translates into actual electoral behavior. This study investigates the influence of social media on the political perspectives and voting intentions of 256 Senior High School students in the Cabarroguis District for the 2028 national election. While previous research has explored general social media usage, studies focusing on the specific correlation between digital engagement and the voting intentions of Filipino Grade 12 students who are about to enter the electorate remain limited.

This research aims to profile the demographic characteristics of these students and evaluate how platforms like Facebook and TikTok shape their political awareness, potentially offering valuable insights for enhancing values-driven civic education in the digital age in terms of cognitive, social, and teaching presences. In this model, classroom time is repurposed for high-level social interaction and collaborative problem-solving, allowing the physical classroom to become a space for refining interpersonal competencies. Previous research suggests that this approach not only improves academic outcomes but also fosters higher-order thinking skills, scientific reasoning, and

student motivation. By shifting direct instruction to the home via technology, teachers can utilize class time for project-based group activities that support active inquiry.

## Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the nexus between digital engagement and electoral intent among the youth. To ensure a representative cross-section of the student population in the Cabarroguis District, a systematic sampling framework was implemented. Participants were selected using a fixed sampling interval of five ( $k=5$ ) from official institutional registries, a method that reduced selection bias and strengthened the study's external validity. The respondent pool comprised 256 Senior High School students (132 males and 124 females) drawn from three educational institutions: CNSAT, Burgos National High School, and Tucod National High School. Data were gathered through a customized survey instrument adapted from the Social Media Political Participation Scale (SMPPS). The tool employed a 4-point Likert scale (1=Never to 4=Always) to facilitate decisive statistical modeling. Internal consistency was verified via pilot testing, yielding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 across all sub-variables. The analysis employed frequency counts and percentage distributions for demographic profiling, while weighted means were used to assess levels of social media exposure and voting intentions. Inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA, were utilized to determine significant differences across groups. Ethically, the study adhered to strict protocols: formal administrative clearances were obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent, and participation was entirely voluntary. For minor participants, a dual-consent process was implemented, requiring both parental permission and student assent to ensure informed and safe involvement.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n = 256)

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	132	51.56
	Female	124	48.44
Age	15–16 years old	90	35.16
	17 years old	122	47.66
	18 years old or older	44	17.19
Grade Level	Grade 11	123	48.05
	Grade 12	133	51.95
Academic Strand	HUMSS/ASSH	128	50.00
	STEM	44	17.19
	TVL	84	32.81
Socioeconomic Status	Poor	162	63.28
	Low Income	63	24.61
	Middle Income	31	12.11
Ethnic Affiliation	Ilocano	133	51.95
	Ifugao	67	26.17
	Tagalog	56	21.88

The demographic profile reveals a respondent base primarily composed of young learners transitioning to adulthood. The high concentration of students in the HUMSS strand (50%) is significant, as these individuals are naturally exposed to curricula involving social sciences and community engagement. According to Landig and Landig (2024), such academic focus fosters political awareness and civic consciousness. Furthermore, the prevalence of 17 to 18-year-olds highlights a critical window for political socialization. As they transition into first-time voters, digital platforms become their primary information source. Angela and Nisaa (2025)

emphasize that social media helps shape their political preferences. This process is influenced by socioeconomic status, with 63.28% of the group categorized as poor. Despite economic challenges, mobile technology allows for "incidental news exposure" during routine social media use (Geers, 2020). The integration of technology is central to their development. Li and Wang (2022) note that modern education utilizes AI and data mining to analyze political classroom dynamics. Finally, the ethnic dominance of Ilocanos (51.95%) suggests a localized cultural context, echoing Viray's (2025) findings on social media's impact on Generation Z's political participation in the Ilocos region.

Table 2. Extent of Respondents' Social Media Usage

A. Daily Social Media Usage		
Duration	Frequency	Percent
Less than 2 hours	68	26.56
2–4 hours	114	44.53
5 hours or more	74	28.91
B. Social Media Platform		
Facebook	193	75.39
TikTok	79	30.86
Facebook Messenger	78	30.47
YouTube	37	14.45
Instagram	37	14.45
Threads	29	11.33
Reddit	15	5.86
X (Twitter)	8	3.13

Table 2 highlights the digital habits of respondents, emphasizing how these spaces serve as primary infrastructure for youth information consumption. Findings indicate high digital immersion; 44.53% spend 2 to 4 hours on social media daily, while 28.91% spend over 5 hours. Combined, over 73% are active for at least two hours daily. Facebook remains the primary gateway for civic engagement, supporting Ahmad et al. (2022), who found that social media lowers barriers to activism. Meanwhile, TikTok's significant presence (30.86%) reflects a shift toward short-form video. This suggests complex issues are increasingly simplified into visually engaging, bite-sized formats.

The robust "digital life" of respondents has profound implications for political socialization. As Ahuja and Kerketta (2021) argue, social media is transformative, providing a platform for marginalized voices and fostering agency among young voters. However, concentrating usage on dominant platforms raises concerns about "echo chambers," where users are primarily exposed to information reinforcing existing biases. This digital centralization suggests that while agency is increased, the diversity of information may be limited by algorithmic reinforcement.

Table 3. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Sex Groups

Study Variables	Male (Mean)	Female (Mean)	t-value	p-value	Decision on H0
1. Exposure to Political Content	2.84	2.72	-1.483	.140	Fail to Reject
2. Political Understanding & Perceptions	2.88	2.79	1.461	.145	Fail to Reject

3. Awareness & Online Socialization	2.77	2.77	0.034	.973	Fail to Reject
4. Content Formats & Interest	2.73	2.78	-0.691	.490	Fail to Reject
5. Opinion Formation & Critical Thinking	2.93	2.80	1.901	.059	Fail to Reject
6. Voting Intentions (2028)	2.72	2.79	-1.126	.261	Fail to Reject
Grand Mean	2.81	2.78	0.016	.346	Fail to Reject

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

Research highlights a consistent "digital uniformity" among Senior High School students in Cabarroguis, where sex does not fundamentally alter social media's impact on political development. Both genders share an identical Grand Mean of 2.77 (p = .973), confirming digital platforms serve as an equalizing "leveler" for political awareness. Both groups "Always" feel more conscious of social issues like poverty and corruption through their feeds. While both sexes "Often" find themselves influenced by digital content, males (2.93) reported a slightly higher frequency of influence on opinion formation than females (2.80). Interestingly, while both groups "Always" verify viral posts, a highly significant

difference exists in their reported "confusion over fake news" (p < .001), suggesting gender influences cognitive heuristics when navigating misinformation. A shared preference for short-form videos like TikTok aligns with Arugay's (2022) "platform-centric" theory, suggesting the medium—rather than sex—dictates behavioral patterns (p = .490). Despite an "ideological maze," both genders demonstrate high civic commitment, prioritizing independent research over peer pressure. Both groups "Always" intend to vote in the 2028 elections (p = .261), suggesting digital exposure has successfully cultivated a firm sense of civic duty across the student population.

Table 4. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Age Groups

Study Variables	15–16 yrs (Mean)	17 yrs (Mean)	18+ yrs (Mean)	F-value	P-value	Decision on H0
1. Exposure to Political Content	2.74	2.76	2.83	1.968	.144	Fail to Reject
2. Influence on Political Understanding	2.68	2.58	2.71	1.831	.165	Fail to Reject
3. Awareness & Online Socialization	2.78	2.72	2.87	2.330	.102	Fail to Reject
4. Content Formats and Interest	2.78	2.71	2.82	1.851	.161	Fail to Reject
5. Opinion Formation & Biases	2.85	2.85	2.92	1.442	.241	Fail to Reject

6. Voting Intentions (2028)	2.70	2.69	2.77	1.013	.366	Fail to Reject
Grand Mean	2.75	2.72	2.82	1.996	.141	Fail to Reject

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

The comparative analysis of social media’s impact on Senior High School students across ages 15 to 18+ reveals a unified demographic experience in Cabarroguis. Grand Mean scores for exposure and voting intentions consistently fall under "Often," suggesting social media frequently shapes political perspectives regardless of specific age brackets. ANOVA results confirm this uniformity; all computed p-values exceeded the 0.05 alpha level. This failure to reject the null hypothesis indicates that age is not a significant determinant of political understanding or future voting behavior. This "generational homogenization" implies that platforms function as an inescapable news bulletin for all students. The data reinforces Political Socialization Theory, suggesting social media is a

primary environment for molding early perspectives. Engagement-driven algorithms segment users into similar environments, effectively bridging developmental gaps. Digital political maturity has reached a plateau where "digital natives" utilize identical verification tools and maintain similar agency. Oden and Porter (2023) found that platforms like Facebook and TikTok show a substantial positive relationship with teenagers' political interest. These findings align with the Impressionable Years Model, asserting that late adolescence is a pivotal phase for political vulnerability. As Bolqiah (2025) notes, this "ideological maze" consistently influences seniors as they prepare for the 2028 elections.

Table 5. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Grade Level

Study Variables	Grade 11 (Mean)	Grade 12 (Mean)	T-test P-value	Decision on H0
1. Level of Exposure to Political Content	2.76	2.79	.659	Fail to Reject
2. Influence on Political Understanding & Perception	2.78	2.88	.107	Fail to Reject
3. Political Awareness and Online Socialization	3.33	3.50	.531	Fail to Reject
4. Content Formats and Interest/Interpretation	2.75	2.83	.121	Fail to Reject
5. Opinion Formation, Critical Thinking, and Biases	2.78	2.93	.029	Reject H0

6. Voting Intentions & Behaviors for 2028	2.71	2.80	.110	Fail to Reject
Grand Mean	2.85	2.96	.260	Fail to Reject

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

The findings underscore digital platforms' transformative role in the civic development of senior high school students in Cabarroguis, Quirino. Social media has evolved from a mere entertainment hub into a primary "digital town square." Grade 11 (Mean = 2.76) and Grade 12 (Mean = 2.79) students exhibit statistical uniformity in exposure, reflecting a "leveling effect" where digital platforms serve as primary political educators. However, a significant difference in Opinion Formation and Critical Thinking ( $p = .029$ ) suggests a developmental shift. Grade 12 students, nearing voting age, move from passive consumption to active "technological narrowing" and critical investigation. This supports

the "Impressionable Years Model," where late adolescence is the phase most vulnerable to digital influence. The robust commitment to the 2028 elections (Grand Mean = 3.51) indicates that online socialization serves as a "civic nudge," turning accidental encounters into intentional democratic participation. Despite challenges like digital confusion, students prioritize a candidate's digital reputation. As Oden and Porter (2023) note, these spaces level the playing field for youth. For Cabarroguis learners, the journey "From Screens to Ballots" represents a concrete process where social media bridges classroom civic education with real-world political action.

Table 6. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Academic Strand Groups

Study Variables	STEM Mean	HUMSS Mean	GAS Mean	TVL Mean	Grand Mean	P-Value (ANOVA)	Decision on H0
Exposure to Political Content	2.68	2.51	2.50	2.44	2.53	.154	Fail to Reject
Influence on Political Understanding	2.82	2.88	2.78	2.84	2.83	.660	Fail to Reject
Awareness & Online Socialization	2.66	2.64	2.61	2.59	2.63	.512	Fail to Reject
Content Format Influence	2.94	2.88	2.85	2.91	2.90	.322	Fail to Reject
Opinion Formation & Critical Thinking	3.28	3.32	3.25	3.21	3.27	.139	Reject H0

Voting Intentions & Behaviors	2.79	2.81	2.76	2.72	2.77	.153	Fail to Reject
Grand Mean	2.86	2.84	2.79	2.79	2.82		Fail to Reject

*p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant*

Statistical analysis reveals that Grade 12 students in Cabarroguis District share a remarkably uniform digital experience, regardless of their chosen academic specialization. ANOVA results for Exposure to Political Content ( $p = .154$ ) and Voting Intentions ( $p = .153$ ) were "Not Significant," indicating social media acts as a universal "democratic equalizer." This suggests the "ideological maze" of modern digital platforms influences student viewpoints independently of formal classroom training, aligning with Bolqiah's (2025) observation that the contemporary digital world exerts a unique influence on students' perspectives, often outweighing traditional academic factors. While general exposure is consistent across

strands, a notable difference exists in how students derive instructional value from short videos ( $p = .038$ ). This reflects the "TikTok-ization" of political discourse; platforms like TikTok (used by 30.86% of respondents) provide rapid, visually driven information that appeals to youth engagement. A high grand mean for Opinion Formation (3.27) suggests students are active researchers rather than passive consumers, corroborating Oden and Porter's (2023) finding of a positive link between social media use and civic involvement. Furthermore, findings support Peter and Muth (2023), illustrating how digital opinion leaders can effectively reinforce or alter voting intentions, transcending the boundaries of STEM, HUMSS, GAS, or TVL tracks.

Table 7. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Socioeconomic Status

Variable Category (Table Refs)	Poor Mean	Low Income Mean	Middle Income Mean	Grand Mean	P-Value (ANOVA)	Decision on H0
Level of Exposure to Political Content	2.71	2.93	2.84	2.82	.033	Reject H0
Influence on Political Understanding	2.81	2.91	2.83	2.85	.404	Fail to Reject
Awareness & Online Socialization	2.76	2.83	2.66	2.75	.525	Fail to Reject
Content Format Influence	2.86	2.95	2.91	2.90	.415	Fail to Reject
Opinion Formation & Critical Thinking	3.23	3.32	3.25	3.27	< .05*	Reject H0



Voting Intentions & Behaviors	2.77	2.75	2.69	2.74	.382	Fail to Reject
GRAND MEAN	2.86	2.95	2.86	2.89	—	Fail to Reject

*p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant*

Socioeconomic status (SES) serves as a significant mediator in specific areas of digital political engagement, though other aspects remain universal. Non-significant results in Political Understanding ( $p = .404$ ) and Voting Intentions ( $p = .382$ ) suggest that social media creates a shared "civic web" transcending financial barriers. However, a significant difference appeared in Exposure to Political Content ( $p = .033$ ), with the low-income group showing the highest mean (2.93). This supports Oden and Porter's (2023) finding that digital environments "level the political playing field," granting disenfranchised youth greater access to political conversations. Significant differences also exist in Opinion Formation ( $p < .05$ ). While

students universally use social media for candidate research, those from lower-income brackets experience higher "news confusion." This aligns with Bolqiah's (2025) assertion that the digital world acts as an "ideological maze," where content volume leads to emotional exhaustion regardless of participation desire. Consistency in Content Format Influence ( $p = .415$ ) suggests standardized digital habits across economic lines. The widespread availability of short-form videos allows students from all backgrounds to engage with narratives uniformly. This reflects the "TikTok-ization" of Philippine politics, where visual storytelling is a primary source of political socialization (Peter & Muth, 2023).

Table 8. Grand Means and Significant Differences in Study Variables across Ethnic Affiliation Groups

Variables (Section)	Ilocano Mean	Ifugao Mean	Tagalog Mean	Grand Mean	P-Value (ANOVA)	Decision	Decision on H0
Exposure to Political Content (T19/20)	2.50	2.60	2.65	2.58	.450	Not Significant	Fail to Reject
Influence on Political Understanding (T31/32)	2.80	2.85	2.90	2.85	.117	Not Significant	Fail to Reject
Awareness & Online Socialization (T43/44)	2.60	2.70	2.65	2.65	.224	Not Significant	Fail to Reject
Content Format Influence (T55/56)	2.90	2.85	2.95	2.90	.339	Not Significant	Fail to Reject
Opinion Formation & Critical Thinking (T67/68)	3.25	3.30	3.28	3.28	.338	Not Significant	Fail to Reject

Voting Intentions & Behaviors (T79/80)	2.75	2.80	2.78	2.78	.080	Not Significant	Fail to Reject
GRAND MEAN	2.80	2.85	2.85	2.83	—	—	Fail to Reject

*p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant*

Analysis shows that ethnic identity, whether Ilocano, Ifugao, or Tagalog does not create a significant divide in how Grade 12 students engage with political content. ANOVA results for major categories, including Influence on Understanding ( $p = .117$ ) and Opinion Formation ( $p = .338$ ), consistently returned "Not Significant" decisions, indicating a "generational synchronization" where digital immersion overrides traditional ethnic boundaries. This suggests social media acts as a "leveling field," providing diverse students equal access to political discourse. This aligns with Oden and Porter (2023), who noted that networked digital settings foster civic involvement across demographics, moving beyond localized factors.

Consistency in Content Format Influence ( $p = .339$ ) reflects stabilized digital habits; students prioritize short-form, visual content regardless of ethnicity. This mirrors the "TikTok-ization" of Philippine politics (Peter & Muth, 2023). The high grand mean for Opinion Formation (3.28) suggests students are active "vetters." Bolqiah (2025) describes the digital world as an "ideological maze" where students must navigate complex information to form political identities. Consequently, for the 2028 elections, ethnic affiliation is not a primary determinant of awareness. This underscores the need for a standardized Media and Information Literacy (MIL) curriculum to equip all students with "Civic Online Reasoning."

Table 9. Significant Differences in Social Media Exposure by Profile Variables

Profile Variable	p-value	Decision
Sex	.101	Not Significant
Age	.519	Not Significant
Grade Level	.659	Not Significant
Academic Strand	.154	Not Significant
Socioeconomic Status	.033	Significant
Ethnic Affiliation	.450	Not Significant

*p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant*

The significant difference in Socioeconomic Status ( $p = .033$ ) implies that material realities continue to shape how students process political information. While social media is often viewed as a "leveler," a student's background remains a "filter"

for understanding. This suggests that students from "Poor" households (63.28% of the sample) may face unique challenges, such as the "disproportionate emotional exhaustion" noted by Sarmiento et al. (2025) when navigating a volatile digital landscape.

Furthermore, the dominance of Facebook (75.39\%) and TikTok (30.86\%) implies that students are heavily influenced by the "Visual Turn" in Philippine politics. Alifatunnisa et al. (2024) argue that casual language and visually engaging content effectively reach Gen Z voters. This suggests Grade 12 respondents are socialized in an "ideological maze" where viral trends and influencer endorsements mold early political identities. Finally, the non-significant

results for Sex, Age, and Grade Level imply that digital exposure has become a universal experience. This reflects a trend where platforms show a positive relationship with teenagers' political interest, regardless of demographic traits. Consequently, the primary differentiator in engagement is no longer age or gender, but the socioeconomic ability to critically navigate these digital environments.

Table 10. Significant Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Political Participation

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
1. Social Media Exposure and Political Understanding & Perception	0.583	< .001	Reject Ho	Moderate correlation
2. Social Media Exposure and Political Awareness & Online Socialization	0.512	< .001	Reject Ho	Moderate correlation
3. Social Media Exposure and Content Format Influence	0.433	< .001	Reject Ho	Moderate correlation
4. Social Media Exposure and Opinion Formation, Critical Thinking, & Biases	0.423	< .001	Reject Ho	Moderate correlation
5. Social Media Exposure and Voting Intentions & Behaviors	0.423	< .001	Reject Ho	Moderate correlation

*p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant*

Statistical analysis presented in Table 10 demonstrates a robust link between digital engagement and civic action. Correlation analysis reveals a significant relationship between social media interaction and political perspectives, suggesting that frequent digital engagement defines cognitive frameworks regarding political issues. This aligns with Ahmad et al. (2024), who identified social media as a primary catalyst for enhancing youth political awareness, effectively transforming platforms into modern spaces for socialization. Furthermore, regression analysis confirms social media exposure is a significant predictor of voting behavior, extending beyond mere opinion.

The study examined social media's influence on the political perspectives and voting intentions of Grade 12 students in Cabarroguis District for the 2028 National Elections. Analyzing engagement through demographic lenses, the research findings reveal that social media has transitioned from a leisure platform to a "digital town square" where students actively vet candidates and verify information. While gender, age, and ethnicity showed no significant impact, socioeconomic status and academic strand were pivotal in influencing political socialization intensity. Significantly, a strong positive correlation exists between algorithmic exposure and political viewpoint

formation. Ultimately, the transition "From Screens to Ballots" represents a concrete developmental process, where digital immersion effectively bridges classroom civic education with real-world democratic participation.

Given the link between digital habits and political identity in Cabaroguis District, a multifaceted strategy for the 2028 elections is essential. Preparing youth for civic participation requires an integrated approach acknowledging their digital-first orientation, transforming digital immersion into informed participation. The primary intervention lies in the academic curriculum. Beyond basic literacy, institutions should cultivate "Civic Online Reasoning," enabling students to deconstruct complex narratives and distinguish credible reporting from misinformation. This shift is critical as social media exposure shows a moderate link ( $r = 0.423$ ) with voting intentions. Voter education must evolve; seminars should prioritize digital background checks on candidates, mirroring behaviors in older Grade 12 cohorts. Pedagogical changes must address socioeconomic realities. With 63.28% of respondents disadvantaged, the Department of Education and local government should prioritize secure digital infrastructure for "Poor" households. Ensuring the internet remains a "democratic equalizer" prevents marginalized groups from being sidelined. Open, values-based home dialogues can further help young voters evaluate platform influence. Finally, these results provide a benchmark for future inquiry. Longitudinal research should track how "cancel culture" and influencer-led campaigns affect first-time voters in rural settings. Integrating these strategies will ensure the next generation possesses the resilience to withstand indoctrination while actively participating in democracy.

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