

## Kids to get taste of politics

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By Melody Guyton Butts

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DURHAM – They may be too young to sway the outcome of the upcoming county commission and school board races, but Durham’s most civic-minded youths will be armed with hard-hitting questions for candidates Thursday at the Kids Voting Durham candidate forum.

All 14 county commissioner candidates have promised to attend, and three of the four school board candidates – with the exception of John Tarantino – have pledged to be there.

While those asking the questions are too young to cast ballots in the regular May 8 primary that will determine the county's leaders going forward, they'll have the opportunity to make their voices heard through Kids Voting Durham's under-18 election. Early voting begins Saturday. About 4,000 youths cast ballots in November's election.

“It’s not only an opportunity for kids to cast a ballot, but to begin cultivating a regular regimen for them to be informed – who’s running for office, what candidates are talking about, what their proposed solutions are for different issues challenging our community,” said Kids Voting Durham advisory board member DeWarren Langley.

It can also be eye-opening for the candidates, in that they can learn about the issues important to Durham County's youngest residents – and future voters.

The forum will take a roundtable format, with youths split among several tables and candidates rotating between those tables. November's forum had kids and teens asking serious questions ranging from mayoral candidates' views on gay marriage to City Council candidates' ideas for the Durham Teen Center.

Only the under-18 set is allowed to ask questions of candidates, Langley warned, but adults are encouraged to attend.

“A lot of adults have gotten a lot of useful information just being there to listen to the candidates answer the youths' questions,” he said. “It's an intimate setting where young people can have a conversation with elected officials, and moving forward we want to continue that dialogue after elections for our young people to have the opportunity to present their concerns to those who are subsequently elected to office.”

Kids Voting Durham is a nonprofit, nonpartisan program of the Durham Cooperative Extension. For more information about the program and for a candidate guide assembled by the Durham School of the Arts Octagon Club, visit [www.kidsvotingdurham.org](http://www.kidsvotingdurham.org).

### GO&DO

What: Kids Voting Durham candidate forum

When: Thursday, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Where: Holton Career and Resource Center, 401 N. Driver St., Durham

Voting: Students can weigh in on the county commission and school board races by voting at the main, north and south county libraries on April 21, April 28 or May 5 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Kids Voting Durham will also operate polls around the county on Election Day, May 8 (visit [www.kidsvotingdurham.org](http://www.kidsvotingdurham.org) for more information).

Help needed: student and adult volunteers are needed to facilitate the forum and staff the polls. Contact Carolyn Kreuger at [ckreuger@durhamcountync.gov](mailto:ckreuger@durhamcountync.gov) or 919-560-7321.

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