



Jim Dwyer Student Reporting Workshop

How to Cover the 2025 NYC Elections

October 7th 2025 5-6 p.m.

Resources for students from [Press Pass NYC](#)

Our monthly series on topics in journalism is named after [Jim Dwyer](#), a celebrated journalist who cared deeply about NYC and crusaded against injustice.

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Guest Speakers

Tim Hunter, Campaign Finance Board communications - thunter@nyccf.info
[Ariana Tzanos](#) - youth organizer and CUNY student who worked on Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's campaign and Youth Civic Initiative with League of Women Voters arianaat.32@gmail.com
[Alex Zimmerman](#) education reporter for Chalkbeat NY
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NEXT WORKSHOP: Monday, November 17th 5-6 p.m. on How to Interview Politicians. Columbia Professor [Basil Smikle](#), a former political strategist, and WNYC/Gothamist Senior Politics Reporter [Brigid Bergin](#)!

INTRO

This is a big election year in NYC! Voters will choose a new mayor, along with city council members and other elected officials. This booklet contains resources to help you cover these elections in a way that's meaningful for your fellow students. At the bottom and throughout this doc you'll see **STORY IDEAS** in yellow.

When is Election Day?

The NYC Elections are on November 4th. You can find information about eligibility, early voting and more on the [NYC Board of Elections website](#). You must be 18 to vote. Go to the VOTE tab. **Last day to apply online or by mail is October 25, 2025**

WATCH THE DEBATES & WRITE ABOUT THEM! The [upcoming citywide candidate debates](#) for Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate start in October. You can report on what they were like. Did they answer your questions? The first mayoral debate is on October 16th.

Which Elected Officials Are We Voting For and What Do They Do?

NYC has a mayor, 51 city council members, a public advocate, a comptroller and 5 borough presidents. Want to know who does what? Read more on their jobs in [About City Government](#). For something more lively, watch [this video](#) on the different roles elected officials play in a specific scenario: open streets (car-free zones).

The full list of everyone running is on the [Board of Elections Website](#) - download the doc or [PDF](#)

You can also look for candidates on [Ballotpedia](#), which includes short bios of each candidate. NOTE: This is a national website so it requires a little navigating.

What Is Going On in the Mayor's Race?!

Our mayoral election is getting national attention for a few big reasons.

Mayor Eric Adams [dropped out of the race](#) in late September. He tried running as an independent, after a series of scandals involving allegations of corruption.

The remaining candidates include Democrat [Zohran Mamdani](#), a 33 year-old Queens State Assemblyman who considers himself a Democratic Socialist. He beat former governor [Andrew Cuomo](#) and other more experienced politicians in the [June Democratic Primary](#). But Cuomo declined to leave the race and is still running as an Independent.

[Curtis Sliwa](#) is running as a Republican and Independent, hoping to attract voters who don't like Cuomo or Mamdani. Sliwa lost to Adams in 2021. All of this makes for an exciting three-way election.

Wondering what a NYC mayor does? [Watch THIS video](#) from our friends at the League of Women Voters. The mayor pretty much controls everything but the MTA (it's a state authority controlled mostly by the Governor).

City Council

These local races get less attention but they are VERY important. There are 51 city council members - each represents about 160,000 people. That's bigger than many cities.

Council Members vote on funding for many things including education. They can also give extra "discretionary" dollars to schools in their districts. **Want to know who represents the district with your school?** Type in the address of your school [HERE](#) and it will tell you!

Here is [the list of all the Council Members](#) so you can read more about the member you find.

To read more about the role of the City Council, check out [this page from the NYC Green Book](#).

Or [watch THIS VIDEO](#) from the League of Women Voters (LWV).

ACTIVITY: Who is running in your council district? Is it a competitive race? What's at stake?

The Board of Elections [website PDF](#) will show you who's running in each district by borough: New York County (Manhattan), Bronx, Kings (Brooklyn); Queens; Richmond (Staten Island)

1. Choose your district (or your school's). Look up the names of all the candidates running in that council district.
2. Check to see which one is an incumbent by looking at the [Council website](#). Incumbents almost always win because they are better known and better funded. But not always! Sometimes they do things that anger their constituents, or someone else comes along who's more appealing or better funded.
3. See [this NYT list](#) of who won the primary and who they're facing in the November election. Scroll down below the results to where it says ALL RACES. **Left** column tells you the names of the Democrats and Republicans running in each City Council District, in Blue and Red. Right column shows who they beat in the June primary and by how much. (Don't worry about that since it's over). **For example:** In Manhattan District 1, Incumbent Councilman Marte is running as a Democrat against a Republican opponent named Qiu. In Bronx District 13, incumbent Republican Marmorato is running against Democrat Aldebol. But a few incumbents don't have challengers.
4. Once you see who the candidates are in your district, go to the [NYC Campaign Finance Website](#) to see how much money each candidate in your district has raised. What does that tell you? If two of them look evenly matched, that's a good sign that it's a competitive race.
5. Now look at where they stand on issues and how they're positioning themselves. Look at their websites. Are you seeing fliers around the neighborhood and mailings? Are you family members getting texts and phone calls from the campaigns? Can you find any articles about this candidate and their opponent?

6. Interview people in the neighborhood. Do they know there's a city council race? What do they know about the candidates?
7. Interview the candidates - contact their campaigns by going through their websites. If they can't talk to you by phone, you can ask to attend an event. Or email your questions to them. **NOTE:** You cannot ask to interview a city council candidate who is an incumbent by calling their city council office. That is considered an improper use of time/money because campaigns are separate from city business. So you must set it up through their campaign office.

Comptroller

Also called "controller," this person watches the city's books. They're in charge of a city budget worth more than \$110 billion. You can read more about the responsibilities [HERE](#); the current Comptroller is Brad Lander, who ran for Mayor in the Democratic primary and came in third. Watch [THIS VIDEO](#) from LWV for more about the job.

Democrat [Mark Levine](#) is running against Republican [Peter Kefalas](#)

Public Advocate

This is a citywide elected position that's first in line to become mayor if the mayor is incapacitated. Watch [THIS VIDEO](#) from LWV to learn more about the job.

A description for what a Public Advocate does is [HERE](#). In sum: The Public Advocate is a non-voting member of the New York City Council with the right to introduce and co-sponsor legislation. The Public Advocate also serves as an ombudsman for city government, providing oversight for city agencies, investigating citizens' complaints about city services and making proposals to address perceived shortcomings or failures of those services.

Democrat [Jumaane Williams](#) is the current holder of this office. Republican [Gonzalo Duran](#) is challenging him.

Borough Presidents

Each of the five boroughs has its own president. According to [NYC Votes](#): *The Borough President serves as an advocate for their borough. They consult with the Mayor on the annual budget, provide grants to local organizations, and advise on rezoning.*

(They appoint representatives to the City Planning and Community Boards.)

[Watch this video](#) for more on what borough presidents do

The boroughs have different names than you might expect on the ballot:

Manhattan BP Candidates

Democrat [Brad Hoylman-Sigal](#) is running against Republican [Seson Adams](#), who does not have a campaign website.

Brooklyn BP Candidates

Incumbent [Antonio Reynoso](#) is running against Republican [Janine Aquafredda](#)

Bronx BP Candidates

Democrat Vanessa Gibson is the incumbent. She doesn't have a campaign website but she has a bio on [ballotpedia](#)

Grace Marrero is the Republican, here's her [ballotpedia](#) page

Queens BP Candidates

[Donovan Richards](#), incumbent Democrat

[Henry Ikezi](#) is the Republican opponent

Staten Island - Richmond County

Republican [Incumbent Vito Fossella](#) is running against Democrat [Michael Colombo](#)

Colombo kicked off his campaign in February, read [here](#) in the Staten Island Advance

Manhattan District Attorney

The district attorney is the person who prosecutes crime in the borough. For more, [read this article](#) from the last election.

Democratic incumbent [Alvin Bragg](#) is famous for prosecuting Trump. He's running against Republican [Maud Maron](#).

NOTE: The other DA race is in Brooklyn and incumbent Eric Gonzalez is unopposed, running as on the Democrat/Working Families Party lines.

Wait, there's more! Ballot Initiatives

Ballot questions take very specific proposals to the people. YOU get to vote, instead of letting your elected official make the choice.

There are [SIX](#) of them in total, according to The City. "Four questions aim to speed and simplify the lengthy approval processes for affordable housing projects. Another proposal would move all municipal elections to even-numbered years in an effort to increase voter turnout. State lawmakers are also asking New Yorkers' to sign off on an amendment to expand an Olympic sports complex near Lake Placid.

What are Judicial Elections?

In New York City, people get to vote for some of the judges who work in the courts. These judges work in the **Supreme Court**, **Civil Court**, and **Surrogate's Court**. [This NYC Bar Association guide](#) explains how these elections work, how to learn about the people running for judge and what the different courts do.

OK - So What are the BIG issues in this election?

The big issues in this campaign are housing, transportation, the environment, safety immigration and how to deal with President Trump. Should transit be free, as Mamdani pledged? How do we make housing

more affordable? **These are tough problems to solve. Do the candidates have realistic solutions?** Where would they face pushback?

HOUSING - [NYT](#) on how the mayoral candidates pledge to tackle homelessness

EDUCATION - Who should run the schools? [Here's what Mamdani is considering](#); Here's what [Cuomo](#) says. [This is what Sliwa posted](#) about his education plans. [This article](#) from June explains where all the candidates in the primary stood at the time on mayoral control of the public schools.

TRANSPORTATION - [WPIX](#) on where the mayoral candidates stand on transportation. NOTE: The mayor does NOT control the MTA. [This NY Post article](#) from June about Cuomo's plan to put the mayor in charge of the MTA explains the disagreements among the mayoral candidates.

ENVIRONMENT - How [do young people feel about the environment](#) this election cycle?

SAFETY - [WABC](#) on where Mamdani and Cuomo stand. [WCBS](#) on the importance of public safety in the race.

IMMIGRATION & TRUMP - [NY1](#) on where the candidates stand on immigration. [There was a lot of speculation](#) that Trump wanted Adams and Sliwa to QUIT the race so it can be a head-to-head match with Mamdani v Cuomo.

ENDORSEMENTS: Endorsements can provide a clue about where a candidate stands. For example, an endorsement by the police union means a candidate is seen as pro-police. The teachers union endorses candidates they think are best for their members.

You can read the latest endorsements [HERE in City and State](#).

Where to Read More About Candidates and Issues

Check out [this New York Times](#) page on the mayoral race

In Depth: Read [City & State's](#) guide to the mayoral candidates

Coverage from all 5 borough: Read [NY1 politics](#)

Sign Up for [Ranked Choices](#), a weekly election newsletter from the nonprofit news site [The City](#)

And **search for articles** about the candidates and where they stand on different issues. They're in the news almost every day!

The [NY Post](#) covers local politics but remember: it's very critical of Mamdani and other Democrats. That isn't to discourage reading the Post. They often raise good points and get juicy scoops. But they have a political agenda/point of view. [The NY Daily News has a vertical on politics](#) worth reading if your class has a subscription.

[Gothamist/WNYC Public Radio](#) (they are one joint news operation) has a [Politics](#) vertical

[Chalkbeat NY](#) - for education news.

[PS Weekly](#) - a student podcast, made by [The Bell](#) and Chalkbeat. There are episodes on how NYC students feel about the mayoral race and an interview with the Schools Chancellor.

Spectrum [NY1 News](#) has a section for each borough

[The Amsterdam News](#)

[City Limits](#)

[Politico NY](#) - all about NY politics

[NY Focus](#) - statewide, too

[AM New York](#) - check out the "boroughs" section at the top for each borough

[HellGate](#) for more opinionated news

[Epicenter NYC](#)

NY1 News - here is their [election page](#)

For Brooklyn news, read [Brooklyn Paper](#), [Brooklyn News 12](#), [Brooklyn Eagle](#)

The Bronx: [The Bronx Times](#) and the [Riverdale Press](#) cover local politics frequently, and [Channel 12 News](#)

Manhattan: [West Side Rag](#); [Harlem Times](#). Schneps Media owns several Manhattan Papers [online here](#) including The Villager and Downtown Express.

Queens: read [Qns.com](#), [The Queens Daily Eagle](#), [Queens Chronicle](#)
The **Staten Island Advance's** online site, [SILive](#), is an excellent source of news for Staten Island

WARNING *Social Media posts from candidates are one-sided!* Their whole purpose is to make the candidate look as relatable and likeable as possible. They're not asking hard questions. Often "surrogates" or supporters of a candidate will do a lot of talking, too. That's obviously one-sided.

Use best practices with AI as you normally would. You can dig up a lot of good stuff. But check links and make sure any news you're seeing about a candidate is coming from a reliable news source.

What Do **Students** Care About?

Check out the NYC [Youth Civic Hub](#) for ideas

The mainstream media are all covering who's ahead in the polls, how much money the candidates are raising and their controversies. What can student newspapers write about?

First - many public high school students don't even know there's an election. To that point: Haidee Chu wrote [this story for The City](#) about students at Bayside High School - the alma mater of Mayor Eric Adams and one of his challengers at the time, City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams.

Why? [This story](#) explains how young people trust their peers more than many institutions.

Maybe student media outlets can change that, by writing about the issues that matter to teens.

Election Story Ideas: Starting Points

- One thing a student news publication can do is **educate first-time voters** about how the process works. That's a form of service journalism. The [Board of Elections website](#) has a ton of information and so does [The NY Public Library](#) – in many languages, too. You can also see a sample of your ballot by typing your address into [Ballotpedia](#).
- More stories for first-timers:
 - **Ten things** a first-time voter should know about
 - **How to research** where a candidate stands on the issues such as the cell phone policy, class size, mayoral control of the schools, environment, education equity, immigration, plus crime and sanitation.
- **Voter turnout:** It was higher this year - and many [attribute that to Mamdani](#). Do your classmates reflect this?

But most students are too young to vote. Here are other stories to explore that have good potential for video, too:

- How to participate in an election **if you're under 18**: there are youth organizers who help get out the vote, NYC Campaign Finance Board can steer you to them.
- [The NYC Youth Ambassador program](#) is “an initiative for New Yorkers aged 14-19 who are committed to increasing youth engagement in local elections.” Reach out and interview one of them!
Op Eds by Youth Ambassadors: [NY Needs its Own Voting Rights Act](#)
[Young Voters are More Than Our Nation's Future](#)
- Why are some people **fearful** of voting? Ask fellow students and people in your community.
- The generational divide: How parents feel about the elections vs their children, which issues matter to them?

- Interview a City Council member and their opponent on issues important to the school community.
- Interview a young political reporter about what they're covering.
- Try some "person on the street" interviews about the election: who are you voting for? Why? Which issues are most important to you?
- Research how your local city council members spent their **"discretionary funding" on education** by looking at how much money went to your school and others. You can find the answers [HERE](#). Seek out key words like "students" and "afterschool" for education related programs. You can also look up what happened with "[Participatory budgeting](#)" in your district - where regular people get to vote on how to spend money.
- Watch one of the [upcoming citywide candidate debates](#) for Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate starting in October and report on what it was like. Did they answer the questions you and your classmates care about?
- Check out a **candidate's record** on education (or another topic) and compare it to their challenger's plans. What do they believe? Should the mayor control the schools? Should all schools use the same math and reading curriculums? How will NYC meet the new law requiring smaller class sizes?
- You might also want to **survey students** to see which issues matter to them. For example: Education? Transportation? Sanitation? Crime? Include a few topics. Take a poll. Then see where each candidate for a particular office stands on the issues that matter most to your students. For example: the candidates in a contested city council race in your borough. Or the mayoral candidates.
- Go deep on one issue, like education. Guess how much money goes to the public schools? About \$40 BILLION. You can learn more about that [here and watch the video](#). What do students think of the way the money is spent? Do any candidates speak to their concerns? [The NYT ran this article](#) in April on how little attention education is getting in this year's mayoral race: *The \$40 Billion Issue the N.Y.C. Mayoral Candidates Aren't Discussing. With more than 900,000 students,*

New York's public school system is the biggest in the United States, but it has received scant attention from candidates.