Introductory discussion for the research lesson:
Voting Rights for People Convicted of a Felony

THE PREFERRED ACTIVITY TIME DISCUSSION (10 minutes): Try initiating a seemingly impromptu conversation by asking the class: *"If we were to have about 30 minutes of 'free time' at the end of class on Friday, how should we spend that time? What should we do with that time?"* While students share their thoughts aloud, you can write down a few options on the dry-erase board (e.g., just sit and talk with each other, do homework for other classes, watch a video, go outside, etc.).

Once you have a few responses, move to the next idea by asking "Wait. Wait. Before we get too far along deciding *what* to do with the 'free time,' we need to make a decision about *how* to decide. Should I, the teacher, decide (the education expert)? Should parents, guardians, and the community decide (they benefit from and pay for public schools)? Should only students in the class decide?" Expect students to prefer that the students in the class vote to decide. Continue the conversation with a few follow-on questions such as "Okay. If 'the class' gets to decide by way of a vote: Who gets to vote? Does everyone in class today get a vote? What about students who are not in class today? What about students who are planning to be out-of-school on Friday?"

Expect a few students to support each of the options listed above. You could ask them why they think the option is fair and then ask other students to describe why the option could be considered unfair. Remember: this is not intended to be a lengthy, formal discussion. Rather, it's a brief grabber to gather students' interest. Be mindful of your time and stay focused. The overall idea of the discussion is to introduce the idea of voting and that maybe not everyone should vote on every issue (or maybe they should).

As the conversation wanes, you can share that today the class is going to explore, not questions about voting for preferred activity time on Friday (which was a fictional scenario), but about the real concerns surrounding voting rights and possible disqualification in the contemporary United States: *Should people convicted of a felony should be allowed to vote?* is the lesson's central question. At the end of the lesson, students will be able to (1) evaluate claims on both sides of the topic and (2) make and support their own answers to the central question.