

LESSON 6

POLITICAL PARTIES

GUIDING QUESTION

How do I learn about political parties and how do I decide who to vote for?

SUMMARY

A political party is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and similar political beliefs whose intention is to achieve power through an election. The role of citizens is to investigate which issues matter most to them and analyze which political party is best to address them.

In this lesson, students are introduced to the concept of voting by moving around their classroom to express their viewpoint on specific issues. After reviewing the concept of political parties, students work in groups to research one of Ontario's political parties. Each group prepares information about the party's vision, leader and platform. In the culminating activity, students think critically about their personal criteria and decide what they liked most and least about the leaders and parties.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to...

- develop an understanding of the role of political parties and citizens in our political system (Citizenship Education Framework – Structures);
- participate in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust and acting cooperatively and with integrity (Global Competencies – Collaboration);
- engage in the inquiry process to process, interpret, synthesize and critically analyze information about the political parties and their leaders (Global Competencies – Critical Thinking & Problem Solving);
- voice informed opinions on matters relevant to our community (Citizenship Framework – Active Participation);
- use the inquiry process and concept of *perspective* to analyze different party platforms and how different groups will respond to the same issue.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Below are some sample success criteria you can use or build upon. Co-creating success criteria with your class will allow students to have ownership over their learning and understand what successful learning looks like.

I CAN...

- describe how issues are influenced by government, political parties and citizens (*significance*)
- work effectively with my classmates to gather a variety of information and investigate political parties;
- organize and analyze information about my group's political party;
- share opinions on topics important to us and our community;
- compare and contrast how different groups may view and interpret the same issue.

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CURRICULUM LINKS

<i>Grade 5</i>	<i>Overall Expectations</i>	<i>Specific Expectations</i>
Social Studies	<p>B2. Inquiry: use the social studies inquiry process to investigate Canadian social and/or environmental issues from various perspectives, including the perspective of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues</p> <p>B3. Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada</p>	<p>B2.2 gather and organize a variety of information and data that present various perspectives about Canadian social and/or environmental issues, including the perspective of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues</p> <p>B2.5 evaluate evidence and draw conclusions about social and/or environmental issues, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of different positions on the issues, including the position of the level (or levels) of government responsible for addressing the issues</p> <p>B3.4 describe different processes that governments can use to solicit input from the public (e.g., elections, town hall meetings), and explain why it is important for all levels of government to provide opportunities for public consultation</p> <p>B3.6 explain why different groups may have different perspectives on specific social and environmental issues</p>
Oral Communication	<p>2. use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;</p>	<p>2.3 communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, presenting ideas, opinions, and information in a readily understandable form</p>
Writing	<p>1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience;</p> <p>3. use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively;</p>	<p>1.3 gather information to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and a range of print and electronic resources</p> <p>3.7 use a range of appropriate elements of effective presentation in the finished product, including print, script, different fonts, graphics, and layout</p>
Reading	<p>1. read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning;</p>	<p>1.8 make judgements and draw conclusions about the ideas and information in texts and cite stated or implied evidence from the text to support their views</p> <p>1.9 identify the point of view presented in texts, ask questions to identify missing or possible alternative points of view, and suggest some possible alternative perspectives</p>
Media Literacy	<p>3. create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques;</p>	<p>3.4 produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques</p>

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MINDS ON

Feet Voting

1. Post two signs in the classroom, one on either side of the room; one should read “Agree” and the other “Disagree”. Alternatively, create four zones by adding two more options: “I agree but...” and “Convince me” (printable signs can be found on Activity 6.1).

2. Read out a statement from below and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the sign that fits with their opinion (more examples can be found in Activity 6.2). Choose statements you feel students in your class will be comfortable answering in front of their classmates, starting with one or two school-based statements. Ask two or three students to explain their choice. After each student defends their response, give the other students the chance to change where they stand, if they were persuaded.

- School uniforms should be mandatory for all students.
- Students should be able to use their mobile devices in class for research.
- Government should focus on making money, not helping people.
- Companies that pollute our air and water should suffer consequences.
- People who make more money should pay more government taxes.

Teacher Note: Prior to the activity, assess knowledge about taxes among students. Taxes are money that people and businesses have to pay to the government in order for the government to function and pay for its programs and services.

ACTION

Research a Political Party

1. Review the concept of political parties and provincial elections in Ontario.
- A political party is made up of people who share similar beliefs and goals about society and government. Each party has a leader who is selected by its group members.
 - In order for the political party to have the chance to work towards its goals, the party tries to win an election and lead the government.
 - During election campaigns, political parties will create a platform – a list of ideas or plans to explain the actions the party would take if they formed government.

2. Divide students into groups and assign each a political party (ideally one that is running a candidate in your electoral district). Ask students to research their political party using campaign literature, party websites, social media channels and media sources. Guiding questions:

- Who is the party leader? What does he or she stand for?
- What is the party’s slogan and/or key messages?
- What are the party’s major ideas or proposed actions if elected?
- Who seems to be the target audience of the party?
- What is the party’s vision for Ontario?

3. Using the information collected, each group will create a presentation and promotional materials about their political party.

Co-create a checklist with your students for the presentation. For example:

- One main slogan or message
- Three social media posts that represent the party’s vision
- A short biography of the party leader
- Four images of the party leader (taken from social media profiles or the party’s website)
- Summary of three major ideas or proposed actions, OR
- Summary of their proposed actions on: _____
- ‘ _____’, _____
- Analysis about who will be impacted by the three major ideas
- One item to distribute to each student in the class

4. Have each group present their political party to the rest of the class. Afterwards, have students vote for the party they liked best – excluding their own.

CONSOLIDATION

My Choice

Have a brief closing discussion about political parties, or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions. Alternatively, you could use a Think-Pair-Share strategy.

- Which party leader do I like best and why?
- Which party’s message or vision do I like best and why?
- Which election issue is most important to my family or me? How does each party plan to address this issue? Which party’s plan do I agree with the most?
- Is there more research you would like to do? If so, what would you like to know?

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Some individuals may jump at the opportunity to share their opinions and even try to convince others to adopt their choices, while others may prefer to keep their politics personal. Remind students that opinions should be respected.
- Consider using an application, such as Wordle, to help students simplify or summarize political party messages.

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ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

<i>Type of Assessment</i>	<i>Lesson Area</i>	<i>Guiding Questions for Teachers</i>
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON: Feet Voting	<p>Are students comfortable answering questions posed?</p> <p>Do students offer suggestions for questions during the activity?</p> <p>Have students discovered issues that are important to them?</p>
AS LEARNING	ACTION: Research a Party	<p>Are students posing questions while they research in order to spark new areas of interest?</p> <p>Can students use one issue of importance to them to narrow their research?</p>
OF LEARNING	<p>ACTION: Research a Party</p> <p>CONSOLIDATION: My Choice</p>	<p>Are students presenting information that is accurate and informative to their classmates?</p> <p>Does student work include examples from party platforms to enhance their argument?</p>

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	<p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give lots of thinking time during the Feet Voting activity. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to offer their own political statements during the Feet Voting activity. Once students have researched parties, encourage students to research the issue most important to them and see how the media reports of the different viewpoints of each party.
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat terms and use different ways to explain situations so directions are clear during Feet Voting. Use an application to simplify political party messages.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written alternatives.
Accessibility & Learning Space	<p>Mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure there is space or accommodations in place for students who need it during the Feet Voting activity. Students could complete Activity 6.2 using the worksheet instead of voting with their feet.

AGREE

DISAGREE

**I AGREE,
BUT...**

**CONVINCE
ME**

ACTIVITY 6.2: WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Read each statement below and decide if you agree or disagree with the view. Respond as honestly as you can and provide a reason.

1. Government should focus on making money, not helping people.

2. Tradition is more important than change in our society.

3. Companies that pollute our air and water should suffer consequences.

4. Canada should spend more money on national defence.

5. The government should spend more money on education.

6. People who make more money should pay more government taxes.

7. Canada should increase its foreign aid to help countries around the world.

8. The government should be small and provide fewer services so that we do not have to pay a lot of taxes.

ACTIVITY 6.3: RESEARCHING POLITICAL PARTIES

My political party: _____

With your group, research the following information about your selected political party using their website, campaign pamphlets and social media messages.

- Who is the party leader? What does he or she stand for?
- What is the party's slogan and/or key messages?
- What are the party's major ideas or proposed actions if elected?
- Who seems to be the target audience of the party?
- What is the party's vision for Ontario?

Using the information collected, create a presentation and promotional materials about your political party.

Suggested elements:

- One main slogan or message
- Three social media posts that represent the party's vision
- Four images of the party leader (taken from Instagram or the party's website)
- Summary of three major ideas or proposed actions
- Analysis about who will be impacted by the three major ideas
- One item to distribute to each student in the class that shares information about the party

