

2 POLITICS



A civic (or political) **issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects society as a whole and, often there are multiple opinions on various sides of any given issue.

An **opinion** is your belief or thought about a particular issue. Opinions are personal, subjective and formed by our values, knowledge and perspectives. Not everyone will have the same opinion about the most important issue facing the province, but there is no right or wrong opinion.

A **perspective** is from one particular point of view. It is an outlook and can represent an entire demographic. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are and our environment and experiences. For example, students may have different perspectives about life and priorities than their parents or guardians. Also, people living in different countries may have different priorities or values in life.

How does a perspective differ from an opinion? Your perspective is where you are standing and how you look at something. Your opinion is what you see or believe about something.

Each individual has a **worldview**, which is an overall perspective with which one sees the world and interprets events on a daily basis. Your worldview relates to your values, which are your principles or standards of behaviour and priorities in life.

In a democratic society, people hold different **beliefs** and **ideologies**, which influence their position and actions with respect to issues of civic importance.

Politics can be described as the activities, ideas and actions that are used to gain and maintain power, or the ways that citizens try to influence a government.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What is politics? Why should we respect others' opinions even if they are different from our own?

OVERVIEW

People have different values and beliefs, which influence their viewpoints and desired actions on specific issues.

In this unit, students explore different opinions and views in a mock schoolyard renovation project. They use their powers of persuasion to try to convince their classmates and the school board to agree with their renovation idea. Students are introduced to the concept of politics and the ways in which citizens influence government. In the *Consolidation* activity, they reflect on politics and the importance of respecting others' opinions even if they are different than their own.

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- engage in an inquiry process to solve problems as well as acquire, process, interpret, synthesize, and critically analyze information to make informed decisions (Global Competencies – Critical Thinking & Problem Solving);
- contribute solutions to meet a need in the community (Global Competencies – Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship);

- participate in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust and acting cooperatively and with integrity (Global Competencies – Collaboration);
- demonstrate effective communication skills to advocate for our ideas using words and examples (Global Competencies – Communication);
- demonstrate an understanding and respect for others' viewpoints (Citizenship Education Framework – Attributes).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I CAN...

- understand and analyze information to make an informed decision;
- contribute ideas and solutions to meet a need in my school community;
- work collaboratively with my peers to develop a 'pitch' about one idea;
- use persuasive language when trying to convince someone;
- compare and contrast how different people may view and interpret the same issue.

CURRICULUM LINKS

	Overall Expectations	Specific Expectations
Social Studies	Grade 5 – B3. Understanding Context: demonstrate an understanding of the roles and key responsibilities of citizens and of the different levels of government in Canada, including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments (FOCUS ON: <i>Significance</i>)	Grade 5 – B3.1 describe the major rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Canada (<i>e.g., rights: equal protection under the law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the right to vote; responsibilities: to respect the rights of others, to participate in the electoral process and political decision making, to improve their communities</i>)
Oral Communication	1. Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes 3. reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.	1.2 demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behavior by adapting active listening strategies to suit a range of situations, including group work 3.1 identify, in conversation with the teacher and peers, what strategies they found most helpful before, during, and after listening and speaking and what steps they can take to improve their oral communication skills
Writing	1. generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience	1.1 identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a variety of writing forms 1.2 generate ideas about a potential topic and identify those most appropriate for the purpose 1.4 sort and classify ideas and information for their writing in a variety of ways
Media Literacy	3. create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques	3.3 identify conventions and techniques appropriate to the form chosen for a media text they plan to create, and explain how they will use the conventions and techniques to help communicate their message

MINDS ON

1. Ask students what they know about politics. Students should write down their thoughts in the K column on Activity 2.1 (What do I KNOW about politics?).

2. Now ask students to write down their next set of thoughts in the W column on Activity 2.1 (What do I WANT to know about politics?).

ACTION

Schoolyard Renovation

1. Using an imaginary scenario, inform students that the Ontario provincial government will be providing money to school boards for schoolyard renovation projects. Since money is limited, schools will need to determine where, why and how they would spend the money, and convince the school board to make the investment.

2. Lead a class brainstorming session on how the money could be spent such as building something new, fixing something or purchasing equipment. The focus could be social or environmental. Record the ideas on the blackboard, chart paper or interactive white board.

3. As a class, group similar ideas together so that there are four to six main ideas. Help students form groups based on their interest in one of the main ideas. Ask each group to discuss their idea in more detail and record the reasons why their idea should be considered. Questions to prompt discussion: Does it solve a problem? What would be the impact on students? How many students would be affected by the idea?

4. Ask each group to put together a pitch to share with the class. You can model a pitch by taking a 'crazy' idea (i.e., building a tree house for raccoons) and tell the class why they should agree with you. Alternatively, you could provide an example of a good pitch (Exemplar – [The Drip Drop, Shark Tank](#))

5. Co-develop criteria for a 'good pitch' with your students. Sample criteria can be found below.

- One clear idea;
- A great "hook" to get the audience excited;
- Short and to the point;
- Shared with passion and excitement;
- Explains why it is the best idea or what problem it will solve.

6. After the pitches, ask students to vote for the idea they liked the most. You can do this through a show of hands or a secret ballot. Tell students they cannot pick their own idea.

7. Review the concept of politics and elections. Make clear connections to the school renovation activity.

- In any given place - a neighbourhood, municipality, province or country – anywhere that groups of people live together and where rules and decisions affect everyone, there will be different viewpoints and opinions about how things should work. This includes deciding which issues are most important and how best to take action.
- In a democracy, we elect politicians to make decisions on our behalf. A candidate is person who competes for the job of a politician.
- During elections, candidates try to convince voters that their goals and ideas are the best. Citizens express their choices through voting.
- Politics can be described as the activities, ideas and actions that are used to gain power in society, or the ways that citizens try to influence a government.
- People have different values and beliefs, which influence their viewpoints and desired actions on specific issues. It is important to respect others' opinions, even if they differ from our own.

CONSOLIDATION

1. Have a brief closing discussion about politics or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions.

- Did any group make you want to re-consider your own preferences for improving the schoolyard? Why or why not?
- Why do you think different people or groups have different ideas or perspectives?
- Why should we respect others' opinions even if they are different from our own?
- Why is it important that people can influence their government? Give examples of how people impact government actions.

2. Ask students to write down their thoughts in the L column on Activity 2.1 (What did I LEARN about politics?).

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- The unit is not necessarily meant to be covered entirely in one period. Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.

UNIT 2: POLITICS

ASSESSMENT

Type of Assessment	Unit Area	Guiding Questions for Teachers
FOR LEARNING	MINDS ON: KWL Chart	Can students generate questions about what they want to learn about politics?
	ACTION: Schoolyard Renovation	Can students generate questions and ideas to focus their pitch?
AS LEARNING	ACTION: Schoolyard Renovation	Are students being respectful of each other's ideas? Are students practicing active listening skills?
OF LEARNING	ACTION: Schoolyard Renovation	Are student pitches persuasive? Are they using strong vocabulary and targeting their audience?
	CONSOLIDATION	Can students articulate what they learned about politics? Do student reflections demonstrate critical thinking and evaluation of the pitches and choices?

LEARNING FOR ALL

Individual Education Plans	Modifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure you link to prior knowledge and interests. Enrichment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to use their skills to persuade others, orally or in written form.
English Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow extra time, when needed. Encourage use of visuals during the presentation.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different communities and cultures will have varied approaches and attitudes towards politics and voting. Indigenous Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be aware that some Indigenous Peoples in Canada were granted the right to vote as late as 1960.