

1 Government and Democracy

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the concept of democracy and the different types of government around the world.

KEY WORDS

government, anarchy, autocracy, dictatorship, oligarchy, aristocracy, democracy, representative democracy, right, freedom

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What are different ways a decision can be made?
- Why are rules important?
- What is the role of government?
- What types of government exist around the world?
- How do other forms of government compare to democracy?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 1: Government and Democracy
- Video 1: Government and Democracy
- Worksheet 1.1: Survivor Island
- Worksheet 1.2: Let's Eat
- Worksheet 1.3: Who Should Decide?

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 20-25 min

1. Split the class into groups and have them sit together. Explain that each group will explore the need for leadership, organization and rules within a community through the following scenario.

Your class is going on an end-of-year trip across the ocean. Your flight encounters a bad storm, and you all become stranded together on a remote island. The teacher and other adults have decided to venture off to find help. It will be several weeks until you are rescued and the class must figure out how everyone will try to live together and survive.

2. Distribute copies of Worksheet 1.1. Each group will answer the questions to figure out how they will work together to survive on the island.
3. Bring the class back to the big group and discuss each group's answers. Emphasize differences between community organization (independent vs. team work/self-serving vs. helping others), the selection of the leader (democratic process vs. virtue or desire) and rules (individual rights

vs. common good/freedom vs. control). Offer alternative options for students to consider if groups do not express different answers.

4. Have a final discussion about the decision-making process involved in the group work. How were decisions made for each question? Did everyone agree with the decisions? Were decisions made quickly? Why or why not?

Teacher Note: Alternatively, you could use Extension A as the Hook activity.

Discussion: 10-15 min

Imagine what your classroom would be like if your teacher had no rules regarding behaviour, habits or homework. What would happen? What would happen if there were no rules or authority in your community or country?

Imagine what would happen if your classroom or school made rules that were unfair or harsh. What would happen? What would happen if people in your community or country were under very strict rules (i.e., 6pm nightly curfew for anyone under 18 years of age, no sports or games in the streets)?

Instruction: 10-15 min

Governments are responsible for making rules and decisions and creating rules for people living within its borders (e.g., education/schools, transportation/roads, health care/ hospitals). There are different types of government around the world and they make decisions for their people in different ways. You can compare governments based on how they share power and by the type of rights and freedoms given to their citizens.

Teacher Note: Show Video 1 or use PowerPoint 1 to summarize the different government types to students.

a) An autocracy or dictatorship is a type of government where one person has full control without the permission of the people. They often force their way to power or become leader because they were associated with or related to the previous leader. Citizens have few rights or freedoms, there is usually a large army presence and the media is restricted on what it can report on. Examples include Syria and North Korea.

b) An oligarchy is a type of government system where power is shared among a small number of people, usually the most wealthy and powerful people in the country due to their family relatives. People living under oligarchic rule usually have some rights and freedoms. Examples include Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

c) A democracy is a type of government where power is shared by all the people and citizens are meant to participate equally in making decisions. Citizens choose people through a vote to represent them in government and make decisions on their behalf. This is called a representative democracy. In democratic countries the people have rights and freedoms such as the freedom of speech and religion. Examples include Canada, the United States, Japan and England.

Activity: 10-15 min

Play a game of running dictation using some or all of the key terms in the lesson (e.g., democracy, dictatorship/autocracy, oligarchy, anarchy). Using the glossary or your own definitions, prepare large print definitions of each term (one per page, multiple copies if necessary).

1. Attach a single term to a wall in the classroom or in the hallway (create numerous locations if helpful). Divide students into pairs with one student acting as the “writer” and one student acting as the “runner.”
2. The runner must run to the wall or board where the key term is displayed, read the text, run back to his or her partner and repeat what he or she read.
3. The writer’s job is to listen to the runner and write down what is said. It will likely take a few trips to and from the posting for the runner to dictate the entire definition to the writer.
4. When most groups are done, the writer can check their work against what is displayed, then roles are reversed and the next term is used.

Debrief: 10-15 min

Have a brief closing discussion about government and democracy. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection in their election scrapbook or learning log (see *Assessment Opportunities*).

- What is the role of government?
- What are the pros and cons of different types of government?
- Would you prefer to live in a dictatorship or a democracy? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

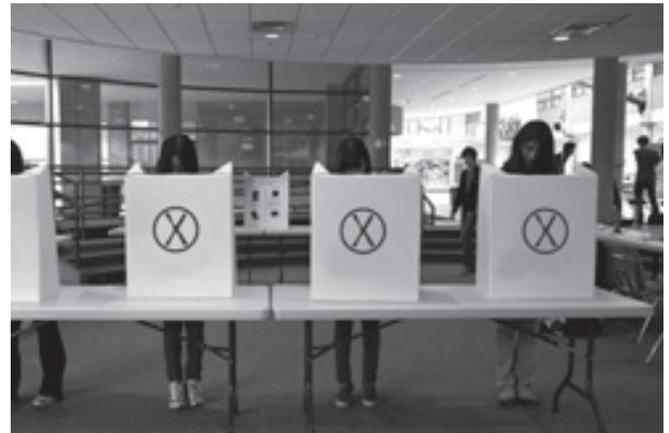
A. Divide students into groups and tell them to imagine they are on a field trip and will be eating lunch at a fast-food chain or restaurant (provide a specific name). To save on costs, they are asked to come up with one order that everyone can agree on. They need to ensure they have one main course, one side, one drink and one dessert. Ask students to fill out Worksheet 1.2.

Afterwards, have a class discussion and consider the following questions: How was a final decision made? Did everyone agree with the decision? Was the decision made quickly? Why or why not?

B. Using Worksheet 1.3, explore the benefits and challenges of decision-making models in various scenarios. Have students form groups and act out one of the scenarios. After each dramatic presentation, discuss which type of decision-making model makes the most sense and why. Alternatively, the groups could act out the decision-making model under both scenarios. Debrief as a class afterwards. Which decision-making process was the best choice in the situation and why?

C. Ask students to imagine what would happen if they were a dictator in their lives for a day or a week. Individually students can create a comic strip or in groups create a short skit about what would happen.

D. Ask students to write a story about a country without a government. What would happen if there were no leaders to decide on laws or to create programs to support citizens? Imagine no schools, hospitals or community centres, no traffic laws or police to enforce any rules. What would life be like?



BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is government?

Government is made up of the people and institutions put in place to run or govern a country, state, province/territory or community. The purpose of government is to protect its citizens and provide services. The role of government is to make decisions and laws (rules) for the good of all the people. Without government, there would be confusion and conflict, and little would be accomplished.

How are governments distinguished?

Different government systems exist around the world. They are distinguished by how they are formed, the allocation of power and by the types of rights and freedoms given to their citizens.

A dictatorship (or an autocracy): Rule by one. A system of government run by a ruler with total power and authority over all aspects of life. This ruler is called a dictator. Autocratic countries generally have limited individual rights, freedoms and civil liberties. There is usually a heavy military presence and the media is limited on what it can report on. People living under a dictatorship do not have individual rights and freedoms. Examples include Syria and North Korea.

An oligarchy (or an aristocracy): Rule by a few or the privileged. A form of government system in which power rests with a small number of people, generally the people who are rich and powerful (due to family lines or wealth). People living under oligarchic rule have some rights and freedoms. Examples include Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

A democracy: Rule by many. A system of government in which power is held by all the people and all citizens are equal under the law. Citizens have access to power and they also have guaranteed rights and freedoms. Since it is not practical to have every citizen contribute to every decision that needs to be made, representatives are elected by the people to make decisions on their behalf. This is called a representative democracy. Citizens also have access to power and can run for political office. In democratic countries the people have rights and freedoms such as the freedom of speech and religion, and free and fair elections. Examples include Canada, the United States, Japan and England.

What type of government do we have in Canada?

Canada is a parliamentary democracy, which is a type of representative democracy. It is also a constitutional monarchy; the Queen, our head of state, holds symbolic power. A constitutional monarchy can be either a democracy or dictatorship.

2 Democratic Rights and Responsibilities

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the fundamental rights and freedoms that exist in a democracy and the associated responsibilities.

KEY WORDS

democracy, government, right, freedom, responsibility, election, universal suffrage

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What does it mean to live in a democracy?
- What is a 'right'?
- What rights and freedoms do we have in Canada?
- What responsibilities come along with our rights?
- How is voting both a right and a responsibility?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 2: Rights and Responsibilities in a Democracy
- Handout 2.1: Highlights from the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- Handout 2.2: History of Voting Rights in Canada
- Worksheet 2.3: Presentation Planning Sheet
- Worksheet 2.4: Our Rights and Responsibilities
- Worksheet 2.5: Voting Rights in Canada
- Worksheet 2.6: The Right to Vote

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 10-15 min

1. Read students the following fictional story:

Last year, there was a lot of bullying among the students at Harrison Public School. Students were not treating each other with respect. There was fighting, teasing and tears almost every day and it was very disruptive to the school community. Over the summer, parents, teachers, the principal and members of the school division held meetings at the school to find a solution. After lots of discussion, it was decided that students would not be allowed to choose their own friends anymore. Instead, parents would make those decisions and teachers would enforce them.

2. Have a follow-up class discussion:
 - Why did the students lose the right to choose their own friends?
 - How would you feel if you lost the right to choose your own friends?
 - Would a better solution have been reached if students had been involved in the decision-making process?

- How important is it that we are allowed to make our own decisions?
- How important is it that we do so in a responsible manner?

Discussion: 10 min

What is a right? What is a responsibility? What are some of the rights you have in the classroom or at school? What responsibilities come with our rights and freedoms? For example, every child has the right to learn, but every child has the responsibility to arrive at school on time and complete their homework. The right to a safe classroom comes with the responsibility to follow the rules.

Teacher Note: Record the examples on a blackboard, chart paper or Smartboard so students can see their responses.

Instruction: 20-25 min

1. All citizens living in a democracy have guaranteed rights and freedoms. Some of these basic rights include the ability to form your own opinion and express it freely (freedom of thought and expression), the choice to worship your own god (freedom of religion), and the right to gather and meet with one another, or to protest (freedom of assembly).
2. In 1982, the Canadian government created the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to protect our rights (Handout 2.1). One section is dedicated to our democratic rights, which includes the right of every Canadian citizen, 18 years of age and older, to participate or vote in government elections. Elections are the method of how our elected representatives and government are chosen.
3. The right to vote in Canada has changed over time. In the early days, only wealthy men who owned property/land could vote. At that time women and people of various ethnic backgrounds could not vote. Universal suffrage is the granting of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women and various ethnic and religious backgrounds.

See Handout 2.2 and other suggestions listed in the *External Resources* section.

Activity: 20-30 min

1. Explain to students that fewer and fewer people are voting in government elections. In the last provincial election, only 5 out of 10 citizens cast a ballot. In the 2004 and 2008 elections, less than half of the people voted. Questions to discuss: Is the decrease in voting disrespectful to those who had to fight for their right to vote? What are the responsibilities that go along with the right to vote?
2. In groups or individually, have students design a campaign poster or PowerPoint presentation to encourage people to cast a ballot in the provincial election. Students should use images and words to describe why it is important to vote. Worksheet 2.3 can be used as a planning tool. Afterwards display the posters around the school or ask students to share their work with their families.

Debrief: 5 min

Have a brief closing discussion about rights and responsibilities. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- What does living in a democracy mean to you?
- How important is it that individuals are responsible members of society?
- Will you vote when you turn 18 years old? Why or why not?
- Should voters lose their right to vote if they choose to skip an election?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. As a class, review the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Individually or in pairs, ask students to consider the responsibilities that go along with each right using Worksheet 2.4.

B. Have students review and interpret the history of voting rights in Canada (Handout 2.2 and other sources). Using Worksheet 2.5, have students record the date when a particular group received the right to vote or when a change was brought about to improve their ability to cast a ballot, and how or why it was granted to them. Afterwards, ask students to create a visual timeline showing when various groups received the right to vote or when access was improved.

C. Ask students to remember a time when they finally received a privilege (e.g., the right to walk to school on their own, have a sleepover, extend their bedtime). Now ask students to imagine they are a member of one of the groups that was granted the right to vote and ask them to write about their feelings and experiences in a diary. Students should write two diary entries: one before being granted the right to vote and one after receiving the right to vote. Use Worksheet 2.6.

D. Investigate countries around the world where people are currently fighting for the right to vote. Have students write a summary or article based on their research, including the *who, what, where, when* and *how*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What rights and responsibilities do we have in a democracy?

A right is a freedom that is protected. The rights and freedoms of citizens are vital to a democratic government.

In Canada, citizens' rights and freedoms are protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter contains seven sections that define our rights as Canadians: fundamental rights, democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, official language rights and minority language education rights.

Democratic rights include the right for every Canadian citizen, 18 years and older, to vote in an election and to be a candidate, as well as the requirement that governments hold elections at least every five years and that these governments meet at least once per year. An election is the process of choosing individuals from among a group of candidates who will run a government.

With all rights come responsibilities. A responsibility is a duty or obligation. It is something you should do in order to respect certain rights or rules.

The right to vote comes with the responsibility to cast a ballot in an informed and purposeful manner.

What is universal suffrage?

Universal suffrage is the extension of the right to vote to all adult citizens, including the removal of restrictions against women, minorities, various ethnic and religious groups, and property ownership requirements.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- A History of the Vote in Canada, Elections Canada — www.elections.ca
- The Evolution of the Franchise, Elections Canada — www.elections.ca
- The Electoral System of Canada, Elections Canada — www.elections.ca
- Voting in Canada: How a Privilege Became a Right, CBC Digital Archives — www.cbc.ca

3 Three Levels of Government

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the roles and responsibilities associated with the three levels of government and understand how government influences their lives.

KEY WORDS

provincial, territorial, federal, municipal, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Member of Parliament (MP), legislative assembly, legislature, parliament, House of Commons, prime minister, premier, mayor, ministry, minister

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE DURING THIS LESSON

- How is your life affected by government?
- How is government structured in Canada?
- What roles and responsibilities are associated with each of the three levels of government?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 3: Three Levels of Government
- Video: Canada's Democracy
- Video: The Levels of Government
- Worksheet 3.1: Government All Around
- Worksheet 3.2: Investigating Government
- Handout 3.3: Government Responsibilities
- Worksheet 3.4: In the News

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 5-10 min

Ask students to consider the roles of the following individuals in education: teacher, principal and superintendent. What is the area or border of their responsibilities (e.g., classroom, school, school division)? Whose responsibilities are the broadest?

Similar to the education system, there is a division of responsibility among governments in Canada. Write the words below on the board. Ask students to match the two columns.

Federal Government	___	A	___	Classroom Teacher
Provincial Government	___	B	___	School Principal
Municipal Government	___	C	___	School Division Superintendent

Ask students to describe the separation of responsibilities (who does what) at several community places or organizations (e.g., police force, business, hospital, fire department, library, community swimming pool, grocery store).

For example:

Police — Chief of Police, Sergeants, Constables
 Fire Department — Fire Chief, Captain, Firefighters
 Business — President/Executive Director, Regional Directors, Local Manager, Local Staff

Discussion: 2-3 min

Who is the current prime minister, premier and mayor or reeve of your community?

Instruction: 15-20 min

1. Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial/territorial and municipal.
 - Each level has its own set of responsibilities. Sometimes more than one level works together on a particular issue but there is always a division of roles.
 - The federal government takes responsibility for matters of national and international concern, provincial/territorial governments are responsible for their own province and territory, and municipal governments are responsible for their community.
2. In Canada, we vote for people to represent us at each level of government.
 - The representative at the federal level is called a Member of Parliament (MP). There are currently 308 MPs across the country, each representing a specific area or district.
 - In Alberta, the representative at the provincial level is called a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). There are 87 MLAs across Alberta.
 - The representative at the municipal level is called a councillor or alderman.
3. The representatives gather together to suggest, debate and approve laws, and to discuss concerns facing the country, province or community and people living in the geographic areas they represent (also known as a constituency).
 - MPs meet at the House of Commons within the Parliament buildings in Ottawa.
 - MLAs meet at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton.
 - Councillors/aldermen meet at the local city or town hall in their community.

4. Each level of government has a leader. At the federal and provincial levels, this person is usually the leader of the political party that has the most members in the legislature or parliament. At the municipal level, the leader is usually selected by people through a vote.
- The leader at the federal level is called a prime minister.
 - The leader at the provincial/territorial level is called a premier.
 - The leader at the municipal level is called a mayor or reeve.

Teacher Note: PowerPoint 3 and Videos 2 and 3 can be used to assist with content delivery.

Activity: 15-20 min and homework

1. Distribute copies of Worksheet 3.1 and ask students, individually or in pairs, to label or identify all the government services in the picture.
2. Take up the worksheet as a class and have a discussion about all the ways government impacts our lives.
3. Assign Worksheet 3.2 for homework. Provide the following links to support research.
 - The Governor General of Canada — www.gg.ca
 - The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta — www.lieutenantgovernor.ab.ca
 - Parliament of Canada — www.parl.gc.ca
 - Legislative Assembly of Alberta — www.assembly.ab.ca

Debrief: 5-10 min

Have a brief closing discussion about government. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook.

- What have you learned about the levels of government in Canada?
- Is government important? Why or why not?
- If you became premier of Alberta, what would be your three top priorities or goals over the next four years?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Review Handout 3.3 and ask students to identify an area of responsibility they care about at the provincial level. In pairs, groups, or individually, ask students to prepare a creative presentation about why it is important. Students can use any form of presentation they choose — it could be a speech, poster, skit, song or rap.

B. Have students find a story related to government in the local newspaper. Ask them to identify whether the story concerns the municipal, provincial or federal government by highlighting the key words that reveal this information. Using Worksheet 3.4, have students answer the following questions and share their findings with the class: What is this news story/article

about? What is the issue being discussed? Which level of government does it involve? What are the arguments or supporting points being made? Who is this story most important to?

C. Have students draw a community picture or map and label five government services (e.g., school, park, hospital, roads, cars, police officer). The label should include the level of government and the responsibility.

D. Invite an elected representative, past politician or public servant (at any level) to visit the school or class to discuss their role and the responsibilities of their level of government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

How is government structured in Canada?

Canada is a federal state, parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy.

A federal state brings together a number of different political communities with a central government (federal) for general purposes and separate local governments (provincial/territorial) for local purposes.

In Canada's parliamentary democracy, the people elect representatives (members) to the federal parliament and to the provincial and territorial legislatures. The local representative is called a Member of Parliament (MP) at the federal level and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) at the provincial level in Alberta.

The dominant party in legislature or parliament, or the party with the most seats or representatives, usually determines the leader of the government. At the federal level, the leader of the government is called the prime minister. At the provincial or territorial level, the leader of the government is called a premier.

Consensus government is used in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. There are no parties, and the legislature selects the speaker, premier, and cabinet members from amongst themselves.

As a constitutional monarchy, Canada's head of state is a hereditary sovereign (queen or king), who reigns in accordance with the constitution. The sovereign is represented in Canada by the governor general, who is appointed by the sovereign on the advice of the prime minister. In each of the ten provinces the sovereign is represented by the lieutenant governor, who is appointed by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. Usually, the governor general and lieutenant governors serve five-year terms.

Territorial commissioners serve in a role similar to a lieutenant governor in Canada's three territories. Commissioners do not represent the sovereign, however. They are appointed by and represent the federal government.

How are responsibilities divided among the levels of government?

Canada has three levels of government: federal, provincial and municipal. Each level of government has its own structure of elected and appointed representatives as well as a unique set of responsibilities.

The constitutional division of powers is based on the principle of subsidiarity, in which the government closest to the issue governs it. The division of powers is found in Sections 91–95 of the *Constitution Act*.

- The federal government takes responsibility for the whole country and matters of national and international concern, such as our armed forces, relations with other countries, money and currency, fisheries and oceans, and criminal law and public safety.
- Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for their own province or territory and regional matters including education, health care delivery, natural resources and transportation/highways.
- Municipal governments take responsibility for their city or town and local matters such as garbage and recycling, libraries, public transit, and local parks and recreation. Municipal governments acquire their responsibilities from their province.

Some powers may overlap between jurisdictions. This is called concurrency. For example, federal, provincial and municipal governments are concurrently responsible for the environment. The federal government enforces the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* and regulates waterways used for fishing and shipping. Provincial governments regulate land use, mining, manufacturing and harmful emissions. Municipal governments are responsible for zoning, garbage disposal, and sewage and water treatment.

How is the Alberta government structured? What roles exist?

The Alberta government is divided into three branches: legislative, executive and judicial.

The legislative branch, termed the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, is made up of elected representatives called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The legislative branch creates laws, rules and regulations for areas under provincial jurisdiction. The legislative assembly consists of 87 MLAs and each represents a different geographic area, called an electoral division.

In the executive branch, the Queen is the head of state and is represented by the lieutenant governor. The leader of the government is called a premier. The executive branch implements and enforces laws, rules and regulations. The premier appoints several MLAs

to head ministries of the executive council (cabinet). Each minister is in charge of one of the provincial responsibilities and acts as an advisor to the premier and the legislature in their area of expertise.

The judicial branch of government is headed by the Chief Provincial Judge of Alberta. The judicial branch interprets the law and punishes those who violate established laws, rules and regulations. In Alberta, there are nine assistant chief justices, judges and supernumerary judges to serve the population of the province. The judicial branch punishes those who violate established laws, rules and regulations. The Alberta court system is responsible for deciding who has broken the law and for dispensing the appropriate punishment for the crime committed.

Where does the legislative assembly meet? What do they do?

The Legislative Assembly of Alberta meets at the Alberta Legislature in Edmonton.

When the legislature is sitting, MLAs are responsible for proposing, studying, debating and voting on bills (potential laws), and raising issues put forward by their constituents. When the legislature is not sitting, MLAs meet with their constituents (people living in the electoral division they represent) to discuss their concerns and to provide guidance and advice relating to government services.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- How Canadians Govern Themselves — www.parl.gc.ca
- Discover Canada — www.cic.gc.ca
- Legislative Assembly of Alberta — www.assembly.ab.ca
- Government of Alberta website — www.alberta.ca
- Parliament of Canada — www.parl.gc.ca
- Government of Canada website — www.gc.ca

4 Political Parties

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about political perspectives and political parties, and research the current political parties campaigning in Alberta.

KEY WORDS

political ideology, political party, platform, electoral division, party member, party leader, candidate, campaign, slogan, speech

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What is a political party? What purpose do they serve?
- How do political parties form government?
- What is a party platform?
- Which political parties are campaigning in the Alberta provincial election?
- What is each party's platform or what promises are they making if they get elected?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 4: Political Parties
- Handout 4.1: 2012 Election Results
- Worksheet 4.2: Getting to Know the Parties
- Worksheet 4.3: Where do you stand?
- Worksheet 4.4: Vote for My Party
- Worksheet 4.5: Watching the Leaders' Debate

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 20-30 min

1. Tell students to imagine that their school has been given a grant or sum of money to improve or expand the schoolyard. Lead a class brainstorming session on the different ways in which the money could be spent. Record ideas on a blackboard, chart paper or Smartboard.
2. Group similar ideas together so that there are four to six main ideas. Help students form groups ("parties") based on their interests. Ask each group to discuss their ideas in more detail and record reasons why their ideas are good ones. Ask each group to put together a one minute pitch.
3. Give each group one minute to share their pitch with the rest of the class.

Instruction: 10 min

1. When a community or large number of people need to get something done, people with similar

interests often form groups and work together to achieve their goals. In politics, these groups are called political parties. A political party is made up of people, called party members, who share similar beliefs and goals for their province or country. Each party also selects a leader, usually through a vote or contest. In order for the political party to have the chance to work towards their goals, the party must win an election and lead the government.

2. Alberta's system of government is based on political parties. Each political party has a leader, and during elections they create a party platform, which is a list of ideas or strategies that aim to benefit the province. While all the parties may agree that education is a priority, for example, they may have different ideas about how to improve the system or what to focus on.
3. During elections, political parties also select individuals (candidates) to spread their message and platform, and compete for the job of MLA for their local area (electoral division). In the Alberta provincial election, there will be 87 local election races happening across the province.
4. After the election, the political party that wins the most local election races (usually) forms government and their leader becomes the premier. Review the results of the 2012 election (Handout 4.1).

Discussion: 10 min

What ideas and goals do you have for improving the province? If you were a member of party, what would you want your party's platform to focus on?

Activity: 60+ min (should be conducted over two classes with homework)

1. Review the list of political parties in Alberta and identify which have candidates running in your electoral division. A list of registered political parties can be found at the end of the lesson. Please refer to www.elections.ab.ca for a current list of parties and nominated candidates.
2. Organize students into groups and assign each group a political party or allow them to choose one based on their preference. Regardless of the method, the goal is to ensure each party running a candidate in your electoral division is covered by a group.

3. Using party websites, online resources and campaign literature, each group should conduct research into the following:
 - What does the political party stand for?
 - Who is the current leader of the party?
 - What are the party's logos, slogans, posters and advertisements? What are the party's key messages?
 - What are the party's main priorities or ideas (platform)? What is their vision for Alberta?
4. Using the information collected, each group will create a presentation about their party and their campaign platform. Students can also produce videos, posters or multi-media works to advertise their political party.
5. Have each group present their political party to the rest of the class. Students can make notes on each presentation using Worksheet 4.2. Afterwards have students vote on the political party they like best – excluding their own party.

Teacher Note: Organize a presentation schedule that would allow each group to visit other classes in the school on a rotational basis to help inform and prepare the student electorate for Student Vote Day. Alternatively, you could coordinate a school-wide assembly.



Debrief: 5 min

Have a brief closing discussion about political parties with your class. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- What did you learn about political parties?
- Why are political parties important?
- Would you ever join a political party? Why or why not?
- Which political party do you like the most? Why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. A political ideology is a set of ideas and beliefs about how politics and government should work. Play a game of Agree/Disagree with your students. Post two signs in the classroom on either side of the room, one with “Agree” and one with “Disagree”. Alternatively, create four zones with the following options: “Totally agree”, “I agree but...”, “I don’t agree” and “Convince me.” Have students move accordingly.

Read out one statement at a time and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the sign that fits with their opinion. Ask students to explain their choice.

- Companies that pollute our air and water should suffer consequences.
- Canada should not welcome any more immigrants.
- Canada should spend more money on our armed forces.
- People who make more money should pay more in taxes.
- Government should focus on earning money, not helping people.
- Canada should give more money and aid to poorer countries.
- The government should provide free child care for all families.
- The size of government should be small with limited services, so that we do not have to pay a lot of taxes.
- Tradition is a more important than change, in our society.

Alternatively, you could assign Worksheet 4.3 and discuss the responses as a class.

B. Using Worksheet 4.4, ask students to create a comic strip persuading their classmates to vote for one particular political party on Student Vote Day. They should explain what their party stands for, what they are promising to do if they form the government and what makes them the best choice to lead Alberta.

C. Have students create their own Alberta political party. The political party should have a name, logo, slogan, key priorities and ideas for helping the people of Alberta. Presentations could include posters, campaign literature, speeches and other election paraphernalia.

D. The leaders’ debate is an opportunity for the major party leaders to share their platforms, point out weaknesses in their opponents’ ideas and encourage voters to support them. Ask your students to watch the leaders’ debate with their families and friends. Ask students to record quotes or arguments they liked or disliked. Afterwards, have students and their family and friends evaluate the performance of each leader using Worksheet 4.5.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is a political party? What purpose do they serve?

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, form government and create meaningful political change. Political parties compete against each other during election campaigns and appeal to the public for their support and ultimately their vote on polling day.

What is the political spectrum?

The political spectrum is a means of characterizing beliefs, values and priorities, and provides a conceptual framework in which to view and evaluate political parties and policies. A linear spectrum is represented as a horizontal line, with parties on the left embracing change and parties on the right favouring tradition.

How does a political party form government in Alberta?

Alberta's system of government at the provincial level is based on political parties. Parties are required to register with Elections Alberta. During elections, an organized course of action is taken by a political party, its candidates and campaign team, with the intention of spreading their message in the hopes of securing constituent support and votes.

The political party that elects the most candidates (usually) forms government and their leader becomes the premier. Most candidates running for election belong to a party, unless they are running as an independent or are not associated with any party.

How do political parties work?

Political parties are made up of interested members of the general public. Anyone above the required age can be a member of a political party — for most parties the age is 14. Party members can discuss ideas and propose policy. Many parties also have youth wings.

Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates and help them get elected. Local candidates are party members selected through a nomination process by the local riding association. The party selects the person they feel has the greatest chance of success as their candidate.

Candidates campaign during the election, share their party's ideas and aspire to represent them in the legislature. To become an MLA, candidates must get more votes than any other candidate in their electoral division during an election.

What is a party platform?

A party platform is a series of declared principles, strategies and policies on jurisdictional issues that concern the government and the public. Parties share

their platforms through announcements, advertising and events, and share their ideas in order to attract support from the electorate and to secure votes.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Elections Alberta — www.electionsalberta.ab.ca
- Campaign literature (pamphlets, advertisements, articles)

Alberta Political Parties

(For a current list visit www.electionsalberta.ab.ca)

- Alberta First Party
- Alberta Liberal Party — www.albertaliberal.com
- Alberta New Democratic Party — www.albertandp.ca
- Alberta Party — www.albertaparty.ca
- Alberta Social Credit Party — www.socialcredit.com
- Communist Party - Alberta — www.comunistparty-alberta.ca
- Green Party of Alberta — www.greenpartyofalberta.ca
- Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta — www.pcalberta.org
- Wildrose Party — www.wildrose.ca

5 Local Candidates and Issues

OBJECTIVE

Students will gain an understanding of current issues in their electoral division and get to know the candidates running for election.

KEY WORDS

electoral division, riding, electoral system, candidate, independent, ballot, incumbent, issue, constituent, Single-Member Plurality, First-Past-the-Post

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE DURING THIS LESSON

- What is an electoral division?
- What is a candidate? How do candidates get elected?
- What is the name of my electoral division and who are the candidates running for election?
- What are the most important issues in my electoral division?
- How can I learn about my local candidates?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 5: Local Candidates and Issues
- Worksheet 5.1: My Electoral Division
- Worksheet 5.2: Election Candidate Profile
- Handout 5.3: A Framework for Planning an All-Candidates Meeting
- Worksheet 5.4: Graphic Organizer

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 10-15 min

1. Explain to students that the province is divided into 87 different areas or divisions. Find your school's electoral division on the provincial electoral division map and write the name of the division on a blackboard, chart paper or Smartboard.
2. Ask students if they notice any differences between their electoral division and others across the province (e.g., size, shape). Ask them to consider why there are differences and what those differences might be (e.g., population, geography, landmarks).
3. Show students an individual map of the school's electoral division (found at www.elections.ab.ca under MAPS). Answer the following questions:
 - What are the boundaries of the school's electoral division?
 - Where is the school located?
 - What major landmarks or attractions are included in the school's electoral division?

4. Give students an opportunity to fill out sections of Worksheet 5.1 or assign it for homework.

Instruction: 10-15 min

1. At the provincial level, there are 87 electoral divisions (also known as ridings or constituencies) in Alberta and each has its own elected representative called a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). The electoral divisions are divided in a way that allows each MLA to represent roughly 50,000 people. This is why the size of divisions differs across the province.
2. During an election, several people in each electoral division compete against one another for the job of MLA. These people are called candidates. Candidates can be associated with a political party or have no association (called an independent).
3. A ballot lists the candidates (and their political party association) running for election in the local electoral division. Each voter is allowed to choose one candidate. The candidate who receives the most votes becomes the MLA. This method of electing representatives is called First-Past-The-Post (or Single-Member Plurality).
4. An incumbent is the term given to the candidate who held the position of MLA before the election.

Discussion: 10 min

How should you evaluate candidates? What qualities and skills do you expect from an MLA? Why are these qualities necessary for the job?

Activity: 20-30 min plus homework

1. List all of the candidates (and their party association if applicable) running for election in your school's electoral division. Show students where they can find this information (www.electionsalberta.ab.ca). Ask students to write down the information on Worksheet 5.1.
2. Ask students to create a profile of each candidate by examining their website, social media platforms and campaign literature, or finding information through newspapers and media websites. For each candidate, students should focus on the following questions to narrow their research:
 - What experience and skills does the candidate

have? Consider careers, jobs and volunteer experience.

- Why does the candidate want to be elected? What goals do they want to achieve?
- What do you like or dislike about the candidate and why?
- What question would you like to ask the candidate?

Teacher Note: This activity can be completed independently, in groups or by jigsaw method using Worksheet 5.2. Ensure that all candidates in your electoral division are researched. Have students share their findings with the class or within their groups.

Debrief: 5 min

Have a closing discussion about local issues and candidates with your class. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- How can a voter learn about the issues and candidates?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate?
- Which candidate do you support the most and why?
- What does it mean to run as an independent? Why would someone choose to run as an independent?
- Would you ever consider running as a candidate? Why or why not?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. To help students learn more about the candidates, their priorities and their ability to take on the role of representative, have students prepare questions for each of the candidates. Consider the following to guide the development of questions:

- Which election issues have you been following most closely?
- Which issues impact you, your family and friends?
- What do you want to know about the candidates before casting your ballot?

Pose the questions to the candidates by email, by conducting a phone interview, by arranging candidates to visit your class or by organizing an all-candidates' debate in your school (refer to Worksheet 5.3).

B. Ask students to collect articles related to their electoral division and the candidates. The articles could be shared on a daily basis as part of current events. Students should identify the *who, what, where, when, why* and *how* (Worksheet 5.4). Post the articles on a bulletin board for reference.

C. Have students organize a mock debate to gain a better understanding of the job of a candidate and their team in a local campaign. In small groups, select one student to take on the role of each local candidate (and persona, if possible); the rest of the group will

be the candidate's campaign team. Using existing arguments taken from media coverage, candidate websites and campaign literature, have each group prepare their candidate for the debate.

D. Have students take on the role of a local election candidate and write a campaign speech to attract supporters. Students should focus on three main arguments or points. Students can take on the role of an actual candidate and use information from the candidate's website and campaign literature to guide their arguments. Alternatively, students could be their own candidate running for election in the electoral division or use they could use a fictional example for their campaign speech (i.e., the playground grant from Lesson 4). Students can be assessed on their persuasive writing skills.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is an electoral division?

An electoral division is a geographical area with defined boundaries represented by an elected official. An electoral division is also known as an electoral district, constituency or riding.

In Alberta, the provincial elected official is called a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Each electoral division has one MLA who represents the local needs and interests of his or her constituents (people living in the electoral division) and addresses issues at the local level.

The number of electoral divisions changes over time and is established by a formula. Electoral division boundary adjustments reflect changes and movements in population. Currently, Alberta has 87 electoral divisions, each represented by one MLA.

What is an electoral system?

An electoral system is the way citizens' choices, expressed as votes, are translated into legislative seats.

All electoral systems have three basic elements:

- District magnitude: The number of members elected per division/district.
- Ballot type: The way in which choices are presented and voters express their preference(s).
- Electoral formula: The method for determining which candidate gets elected (or wins).

How does First-Past-The-Post/Single-Member Plurality work?

First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) is the electoral system used in Alberta (and across Canada). Another name for FPTP is Single-Member Plurality.

- The district magnitude is single-member districts. Citizens elect one representative per electoral division.
- The ballot type is categorical or exclusive ballot. Voters are allowed to choose one candidate/party on their ballot.

- The electoral formula is plurality. The successful candidate must receive at least one more vote than any of the other candidates (or the most votes).

Example of FPTP: In an electoral division with 100 ballots cast.

VOTE TOTALS BY CANDIDATE

Lisa (Banana Party)	40
Josh (Pear Party)	15
Nancy (Apple Party)	11
Norman (No Affiliation)	34

In this case, Lisa becomes the elected representative because she has the most votes. Note: Lisa wins even though 60 per cent of the voters chose other candidates. Under FPTP, it is not necessary to win over 50 per cent of the votes — the candidate simply needs to win the most votes.

How does one find out which electoral division they are in?

You can visit the Elections Alberta website and search using your postal code or location/address to find out your electoral division. During a provincial election campaign, Elections Alberta also posts a list of candidates running for election in each division. The final list is posted after nominations close (14 days before polling day) and once all candidacies have been confirmed.

What are the most important issues facing my electoral division?

An individual's political views are personal and highly subjective. They are unique and shaped by their experiences and feelings. Therefore, each person is responsible for forming his or her own opinions. Sometimes those opinions can be formed by listening to other people whose opinions you respect, researching information through media, and sometimes it simply takes a period of reflection to come to your own conclusions.

No one can tell you how to vote, although this is the primary objective of all candidates and campaigns. It is up to you, the voter, to decide what is most important, who you should listen to, and ultimately, who you will support.

How can I learn about my candidates and the issues they support?

There are many ways to gather information about your local candidates. Community groups hold town hall meetings where constituents are invited to listen to candidates speak about issues they and their parties support. Information can also be found on radio and television, and in newspapers and magazines. You may also visit local campaign offices, attend campaign events or have a chance to talk to the candidates when they visit homes during door-to-door canvassing, or

campaign in public settings. Information is easily found online through party websites, media websites and social media platforms.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Provincial electoral division maps — www.electionsalberta.ab.ca (Under MAPS)
- Candidate information/literature (candidate websites, campaign flyers)
- Electoral Systems — www.parl.gc.ca

6 Messages in the Media

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about various types of media and scrutinize multiple sources to determine whether a story is fact or opinion-based.

KEY WORDS

media, paid media, earned media, owned media, social media, news media, reporter, columnist, editorial, bias, opinion

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What are the different types of media?
- What is the difference between Old media and New media?
- What is the role of news media in an election?
- Why is it important to know the difference between opinion and fact?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 6: Messages in the Media
- Worksheet 6.1: Analyzing Media
- Worksheet 6.2: Facts vs. Opinions

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 25-30 min

1. Review the concept of media. Media is the communication of information and messages to people.
2. Collect and share one or more examples of paid, earned and owned media related to the election (e.g., newscast summary or news article, candidate's blog, party's campaign ad on TV or in the newspaper). For each piece, initiate a discussion related to the following:
 - Who is the audience?
 - Who is the sender?
 - Who paid for it?
3. Have a closing discussion: Which type of media did you find to be the most effective and why? Which type of media did you find to be the most credible and why?

Instruction: 10-15 min

1. Media can be divided into three main types: Paid, Earned and Owned.
 - Paid Media: Awareness gained through paid advertising, such as TV commercials or newspaper ads.

- Earned Media: Awareness gained through efforts other than advertising, such as news coverage.
- Owned Media: Self-managed promotional platforms, such as your website, blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter feed.

2. Media is often defined as Old (or Traditional) or New media.
 - Old media includes sources in broadcast (television or radio) or print format (newspaper, magazines and pamphlets/flyers).
 - New media includes content that is easily accessible, such as online sources and social media platforms.
3. The news media play an important role in elections. News media reports on the events of an election campaign, provides a way for parties and candidates to get their message out, encourages debate between the parties and candidates, and provides a way for citizens to communicate their concerns and opinions.

Discussion: 10-15 min

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each type of media?

Activity: 20 min and homework

1. Explain to students that in most cases, the news media provides factual and informational coverage without letting their opinions (biases) interfere. However, the news media also produces articles that are an analysis or reflection of a particular situation, event or person. These are called editorials or opinion pieces because they share opinions.
2. Share an example of a news story and an editorial related to the election. As a class, distinguish between the two examples and help students understand the difference between opinion and fact.
3. For homework or in class, ask students to read through one or more newspapers and analyze four stories related to the election using Worksheet 6.1.

Debrief: 5 min

Have a closing discussion about the role of media in elections.

- What have you learned about the different types of media?
- What is the role of media in election campaigns?
- Why is it important to read multiple sources of news?
- Why is it important to know the difference between opinions and facts?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Assign Worksheet 6.2 to your class. Ask students to determine which of the ten fictional statements provided could be fact or opinion-based. Have each student pick a statement and use it as the inspiration to write a short newspaper article. Have students discuss their articles the next day. Did they choose a fact or opinion-based statement? How was it incorporated into their article?

B. Create a classroom social media account (e.g., Twitter) to track campaign news and your local candidate and/or the parties running candidates in your electoral division. You can follow CIVIX (@CIVIX_Canada) and Student Vote (@studentvote), major news outlets, and particular journalists or pundits. Each day you can review the news coming through your classroom's personalized Twitter feed.

C. As a class, have students analyze a campaign commercial for one or more of the political parties. Ask them to determine whether the advertisement promotes the political party's platform, or whether it attacks another party. They should identify the main message of the ad, what images are shown to support that message, and analyze whether they believe it is effective or achieves its goal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What are the different types of media?

Media can be divided into three main types: Paid, Earned and Owned.

- Paid Media: Awareness gained through paid advertising, such as TV commercials or newspaper ads.
- Earned Media: Awareness gained through efforts other than advertising, such as news coverage.
- Owned Media: Self-managed promotional platforms, such as your website, blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel and Twitter feed.

Media can be defined as Old (Traditional) or New media.

- Old media includes sources in broadcast (television or radio) or print format (newspaper, magazines and pamphlets/flyers). Old media is typically one way communication, delivered at a specific time, has limited jurisdictional reach and strives to maintain journalistic integrity and standards.
- New media includes content that is easily accessible,

such as online sources and social media platforms. New media is typically interactive, user-driven, functions in real-time, is borderless and does not always adhere to journalistic standards and ethics.

What is the difference between factual and opinion-based news coverage?

In most cases, the news media provides factual and informational coverage to inform the public without letting their opinions (biases) interfere.

The news media also produces opinion pieces or editorials, where news organizations and their columnists or pundits will openly add their opinions or those of their writers to their stories to influence their audience.

How does the news media operate during an election campaign?

Most news organizations remain officially neutral during elections. These organizations will balance the amount of coverage given to any party or candidate, so that no one gains a real or perceived advantage.

During an election, some newspapers will endorse a candidate or party and explain their decision in an editorial.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Provincial, regional and local media websites. Major examples include:

- Calgary Herald — www.calgaryherald.com
- Edmonton Journal — www.edmontonjournal.com
- Edmonton Sun — www.edmontonsun.com
- Calgary Sun — www.calgarysun.com
- Lethbridge Herald — www.lethbridgeherald.com
- Red Deer Advocate — www.reddeeradvocate.com
- Medicine Hat News — www.medicinehatnews.com
- Grande Prairie Daily Herald-Tribune — www.dailyheraldtribune.com
- Fort McMurray Today — www.fortmcmurraytoday.com

7 The Voting Process

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the voting process and evaluate the campaign issues, party platforms, leaders and local candidates in preparation for Student Vote Day.

KEY WORDS

advance poll, elector, candidate, electoral division, issue, ballot, secret ballot, valid ballot, rejected ballot, spoiled ballot, declined ballot

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- Why is voting by secret ballot important?
- Who can vote in provincial elections in Alberta?
- How does the voting process work?
- How do I mark my ballot?
- How do I make my decision about who to vote for?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- PowerPoint 7: The Voting Process
- Video: How to Organize Student Vote Day
- Worksheet 7.1: Preparing to Vote
- Worksheet 7.2: How to Vote
- Worksheet 7.3: A Trip to the Polling Station

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Hook: 10 min

1. Ask students to answer the following questions in their head, or choose questions that will work for your class. Consider questions that may not always elicit truthful answers.
 - a) What is your favourite TV show?
 - b) What is your favourite song?
2. Ask students the same questions again, but this time ask students to stand up and share their answers aloud in front of the class.
3. Have a follow-up discussion. Did anyone answer the questions differently when they had to share their answers aloud with the class? If so, why?
4. Voting in elections is done by secret ballot. This means that no one except the voter knows the choice that was made. Voters mark their ballots behind a privacy screen and the ballot is put in the ballot box without identifying who the voter is.

Discuss the importance of voting by secret ballot in elections. What are the benefits of voting in private? Emphasize the lack of opportunity for violence and intimidation.

Instruction: 15 min

1. To be qualified to vote in an Alberta provincial election, you must be:
 - A Canadian citizen,
 - At least 18 years of age or older,
 - Ordinarily resident in Alberta for the past six months.
2. A polling station is the official term given to the voting location. When you arrive at your polling station, the election officer will ask your name and will check for your name on the list of voters. If your name is on the list, you will be given a ballot to vote. If your name is not listed, you will be required to produce government issued identification containing your name, photograph and current address before being given a ballot. Alternatively, if you do not have a government photo ID, you can provide two other pieces of ID and one must confirm your address.
3. A ballot lists the names of the candidates (and political parties) running in your electoral division. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot to mark your choice. As long as you clearly mark the ballot for one candidate (e.g., checkmark, X, shading in), your choice will be counted (valid ballot).

Teacher Note: Show students what a ballot looks like and how to fill it out correctly. Review the following ballot terms: valid, rejected, declined and spoiled. Use ballot examples (refer to the Student Vote Election Operations Manual).

Activity: 20 min and homework

1. Review the list of candidates (and their parties) that students are able to vote for in the provincial election.
2. Using Worksheet 7.1, have students reflect on the campaign issues, parties, leaders and local candidates.
3. Allow students the opportunity to share their views. Some individuals may jump at the opportunity to share their opinions and even try to convince others to adopt their choices, while others may opt for silence and prefer to keep their politics personal. Remind students that opinions should be respected and accepted.

Teacher Note: This could turn into a fruitful discussion about the privacy of voting decisions.

4. Encourage students to take their worksheet home and start discussions with their family and friends. What do they think about the leaders, parties and candidates? Do they know who they are going to vote for? Challenge students to help their family members find out when and where to vote, and educate them on the choices. Suggest to students that they accompany their parents to the polling station and observe the process (see Extension C).

Debrief: 10 min

Have a brief closing discussion about voting and making your decision. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- Do you feel ready to vote? Why or why not?
- What research or activity has helped you make your decision? Is there more research you would like to do?
- Do you feel that you know more about the election than your parents?
- Why is voting important?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Using Worksheet 7.2, have students illustrate the steps to voting at the polling station. Encourage students to share their worksheet with their family.

Teacher Note: The Organizing Student Vote Day video may be helpful.

B. Create a ‘pledge to vote’ activity for all Student Vote participants. This could include a ceremony or an official “I am a Voter” agreement, whereby students pledge to vote when they turn 18 or agree to be a life-long voter.

C. Allow students to make predictions regarding the election results. Who do you think is going to win locally? Which party do you think will form government? Why do you think this will be the outcome?

D. Sometimes adults can be intimidated by the voting process as well. Encourage students to “take” their family members to the polls and support them in casting their ballot. Ask students to observe the process while at the polling station and fill out Worksheet 7.3.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Who can vote?

To be eligible to vote in a provincial election in an Alberta provincial election, you must be:

- A Canadian citizen,
- At least 18 years of age or older,
- Ordinarily resident in Alberta for the past six months.

What type of identification do I need in order to vote?

- An elector whose name is on the list of electors is not required to produce identification prior to voting.
- An elector whose name is not on the list of electors may vote after producing government issued identification containing the elector’s photograph, current address and name. This includes an Operator’s (Driver’s) Licence or an Alberta Identification Card.
- An elector whose name is not on the list of electors, and who is unable to produce government issued identification, must produce two pieces of identification from the list posted on the Elections Alberta website (www.elections.ab.ca). Both pieces of identification must establish the elector’s name, and one piece must establish the elector’s current address.

How do I get on the List of Electors?

You can register to vote using Election Alberta’s secure on-line registration system called Voterlink. You can also contact Elections Alberta in person or by phone, e-mail or facsimile. Your information will be added to the Register of Electors to ensure that it will appear on subsequent lists of electors.

Where do I vote?

- Each electoral division is divided into smaller polling subdivisions, which are defined geographic areas. Eligible voters residing within each polling subdivision vote at the polling station designated for their area.
- During the election period, you can find your polling station on the Elections Alberta website and in local newspapers. In addition, notices are delivered to all residences in the province.

How does the voting process work?

1. Once you confirm your eligibility, you are given a ballot that has the election officer’s initials on the back.
2. Go behind a voting screen to mark your ballot. Choose only one candidate on the ballot.
3. Hand your folded ballot back to the election officer to check for the initials.
4. Place your folded ballot in the ballot box.

What is a secret ballot?

Voting across Canada is done by secret ballot. This ensures the privacy of each voter’s choice. No one except the voter knows the choice that was made.

How do I mark my ballot?

A ballot lists the names of the candidates (and political parties) running in your electoral division. There is a space beside each candidate’s name on the ballot where you can mark your preference. As long as you clearly mark the ballot for one candidate, your ballot will be valid. This includes a checkmark, X, shading in or another marking.

What is a rejected ballot?

A rejected ballot is a ballot that cannot be counted due to a deliberate or accidental unrecognizable choice. This can include marking the ballot for more than one candidate even if different symbols are used, ranking the candidates, leaving the ballot blank, writing your name or anything on the ballot.

What is a declined ballot?

A voter may also choose to use their vote to express their dissatisfaction with the options given. This is called a declined ballot. In Alberta, this is done by receiving a ballot, then giving the unmarked ballot back to the poll clerk. The voter states that he or she does not want to vote. The deputy returning officer will write the word “declined” on the ballot and place it in the declined ballot envelope.

What is a spoiled ballot?

A spoiled ballot is a ballot that has been kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new ballot. The deputy returning officer shall write the word “spoiled” on the back of the ballot and place it in the spoiled ballot envelope.

What are advance polls? What are other ways to vote?

Electors, who are away, busy or unable to vote on polling day, have the option of voting at advance polls. Advance polls are held from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday prior to polling day.

You can also vote by special ballot (mail-in ballot) if you are unable to vote on polling day. You must request a special ballot from the returning officer in your electoral division. You can only request a special ballot if you are unable to vote at the advance polls or on polling day because you are:

- Physically incapacitated,
- Away from your electoral division,
- Serving as an inmate,
- An election officer, candidate, official agent or scrutineer, or
- Living in a remote area, as defined in the *Election Act*.

Visit www.electionsalberta.ab.ca for more information.

How do I prepare to vote?

Get informed. Learn about the candidates, the political parties and the issues. When preparing to vote, you consider reasons to support a candidate for premier, a local candidate for MLA, a political party, a specific issue or a whole party platform. Voting requires that you do your research and devote the necessary time.

How do you know if you are ready to vote?

You feel confident in your ability to make a choice.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Student Vote Election Operations Manual
- Elections Alberta — www.electionsalberta.ab.ca

8

Post-Election Analysis

OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze the results of the official election and Student Vote and reflect on the outcome and their participation.

KEY WORDS

analyze, seat count, popular vote percentage, voter turnout, governing party, minority government, majority government, official opposition, opposition party

QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED DURING THIS LESSON

- What was the outcome of the Student Vote parallel election locally and provincially?
- What was the outcome of the general election locally and provincially?
- What is the difference between a majority and minority government?
- Who will form the next government?
- How did campaign events impact the outcome of the election?

SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

- Handout 4.1: 2012 Election Results

TEACHING STRATEGIES**Hook: 5 min**

1. Announce the results of your school's Student Vote parallel election. Who received the most votes? Was it a close race?
2. Compare the results of your school's vote with the results of other schools in your electoral division. Are the results similar or different? How did the results vary between schools? (Individual school results can be found at www.studentvote.ca/ab2015)

Teacher Note: Remember to wait until the day following the official election to share the Student Vote results. Student election officials at your school should be sworn to secrecy.

Discussion: 5-10 min

Which local candidate was elected in your electoral division in the general election? Which party formed the new government?

Instruction: 10 min

1. Seat count is the term used to show the number of representatives that each party will have in the

legislature. It reflects the number of local election races won by each party.

2. Popular vote is the term used to show the support a political party received across the province. It is shown as a percentage and is calculated by dividing the number of votes a party received by the total number of votes in the election.
3. The party that has the most seats (usually) forms government. The party that has the second-highest number of seats becomes the official opposition. Any other party is called an opposition party.
4. If the governing party has more than half of all the seats (44 or more in Alberta), they will have a majority government. If they have less than half (43 or fewer), they will have a minority government.
5. In order to pass any legislation (laws) or budgets, the bills must have support from more than half of the members of the legislature. If the governing party has a minority government, they will need to gain the support of the opposition parties in order to pass anything.

Activity: 30-35 min

1. In groups, have students analyze the results of the general election and the Student Vote parallel election for the current and last election.
 - a) Province-wide seat count comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - b) Province-wide popular vote comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - c) Local election results comparison (General election vs. Student Vote)
 - d) Province-wide seat count comparison (2012 vs. current election)
 - e) Province-wide popular vote comparison (2012 vs. current election)

Teacher Note: Past election results can be found on Handout 4.1.

2. Have a follow-up conversation after analyzing the results and media reports. Consider the following questions:
 - Were there any big surprises in the election results?

- Which parties gained or lost seats since the last election? Why do you think that happened?
- Were the Student Vote results similar to the official election results? Why or why not?
- Which type of graph works best for displaying various types of election results?



Debrief: 5 min

Have a brief closing discussion about the outcome of the election and participation in the Student Vote program. Alternatively, ask students to write a reflection for their election scrapbook or learning log.

- Why is it important to analyze the results? What is there to be learned?
- Did the election results turn out as expected? Were there any events that might have influenced the results?
- What did you learn about politics and the election process from your participation in the Student Vote program?
- Will you vote in the future?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

A. Once a candidate is elected to the legislature, he or she has to make decisions about how to pursue issues on behalf of his or her constituency. Have students write to their newly elected MLA regarding an issue they believe should be considered a priority to address.

B. Choose a local candidate in your electoral division who received a significant proportion of the votes in the Student Vote election but did not secure a seat in the Alberta Legislature. Invite the candidate into your school for a conversation with your class. Consider asking questions about their campaign experience and the candidate's future plans.

C. Give students a chance to share their election scrapbooks from the campaign. Each student could choose two of their favourite entries to share with the class.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

How do I analyze election results?

Under a First-Past-the-Post or Single-Member Plurality system, election results are analyzed by the number of candidates elected by each political party. In other words, the number of seats each political party will have in the legislature. In Alberta, the 87 seats will be divided among registered political parties and independent candidates.

The number of votes cast for each political party can also be examined. This analysis provides an indication of the level of support across the province and is expressed by a percentage (popular vote percentage).

Who will form government? What kind of government will it be?

The political party with the most seats (usually) forms government and their leader becomes the premier of the province.

A minority government is a government in which the governing party has the most seats but less than half the total (43 or fewer in Alberta).

A majority government is a government in which the governing party has an absolute majority of the seats (more than half). In Alberta, a political party has to win at least 44 seats to win a majority government.

In order to pass any legislation (laws) or budgets, the bills must have support from more than half of the members of the legislature. If the governing party has a minority government, they will need to gain the support of the opposition parties in order to pass anything. If the government does not have their support on money-related bills, the governing party can lose confidence of the legislature. This usually results in another election.

Which party will form the official opposition?

The political party that receives the second-highest number of seats takes on the role of the official opposition. It is their responsibility to hold the government to account and to question their actions. The official opposition organizes a shadow cabinet to act as expert critics to each government ministry.

Which issues will be forefront on the agenda for the new legislature?

The throne speech outlines the government's plans and initiatives. The speech is delivered by the lieutenant governor at the beginning of each new session of the legislature.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- Alberta General Election results — www.electionsalberta.ab.ca
- Student Vote Alberta results — www.studentvote.ca/ab2015
- Newspapers and media websites