

8

POLITICAL PARTIES

		
		

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize and distinguish between different beliefs, ideologies, political parties and policy ideas.

A linear spectrum is represented as a horizontal line, with the left favouring social equality, government involvement and more social services, and the right favouring tradition, smaller government and lower taxes.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with a shared vision and political ideology whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change. Political parties are made up of interested members of the general public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

During an election campaign, an organized course of action is taken by a political party, its candidates and campaign teams with the intention to share its message and ideas with voters.

A **political platform** is a series of declared principles, policies and plan on issues concerning government and the public. Candidates and parties use a communications strategy that incorporates all three types of media (paid, earned, owned) to share their platforms through announcements, advertising and events and to gain support from constituents.

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to explore key issues and to participate in constructive dialogue about priorities and public policies. This process includes establishing which issues are most important to you and your community, and evaluating how the different political parties will address them.

LESSON 8: POLITICAL PARTIES

GUIDING QUESTIONS

How do I learn about the political parties? Which political party aligns with my views?

PURPOSE

A political party is a group of like-minded individuals with similar political beliefs and goals 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 Alberta's political parties. Each group prepares information about the party's vision, their leader and platform. In the *Conclusion*, students think critically about their personal criteria and decide what they liked most and least about the leaders and parties.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, I can...

- explain the role of political parties in our political system;
- participate in teams by establishing positive and respectful relationships, developing trust and acting cooperatively;
- interpret, synthesize and critically analyze information about the political parties and their leaders;
- voice informed opinions on matters relevant to our community;
- analyze different party platforms and how different groups will respond to the same issue.

INTRODUCTION

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 in Activity 8.1).

2. Read out a statement from Activity 8.2 and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the sign that fits with their opinion. 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 choices. After each student defends their response, give the other students the chance to change where they stand, if they were persuaded. For example:

- School uniforms should be mandatory for all students.
- Students should be able to use their mobile devices in the classroom for learning purposes.
- Government should focus on making money, not helping people.
- Companies that pollute our air and water should suffer consequences.
- The government should invest more money in our armed forces.
- Canada should give financial aid to poorer countries.

ACTIVITIES

Research a Political Party

1. Review the concept of political parties and provincial elections in Alberta.

- 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 they would take if they were in power.

2. Divide students into groups and assign each a political party (ideally one that is running a candidate in your electoral division). Ask students to research their political party using campaign literature, party websites, social media channels and news media. Use Activity 8.3 to keep track of information and 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 Alberta?

Teacher Note: As an alternative to Activity 8.3, students can work individually or in small groups to complete Activity 8.4 to explore specific election issue(s) more in-depth and positions of political parties.

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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:

- The party's logo
- One main slogan or message
- Three social media posts that represent the party's vision
- A short biography of the party leader
- Two 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 three pre-selected issues by the class
- 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.

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.

ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENT LEARNING

After the activities, have students complete the reflection card (Activity 8.5). "The first thing I will share with my parents tonight is..."

CONCLUSION

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 support the most 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 I would like to do? What else would I 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