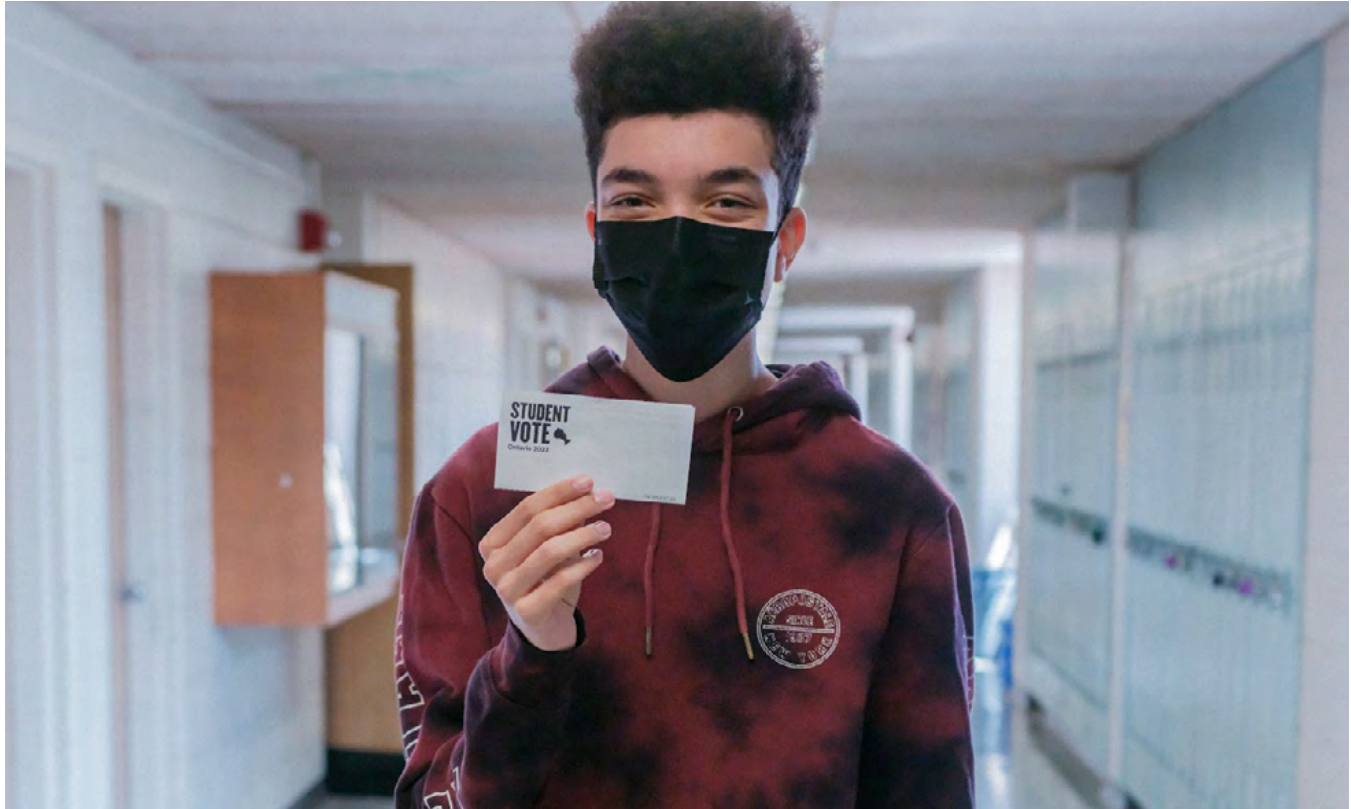# Lesson 8
The Voting Process

GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ Is voting important?

❷ How do I vote in local elections?

❸ What are some barriers to participating in the voting process?

OVERVIEW

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

In this lesson, students analyze different reasons for voting in elections. Students review essential information about voter eligibility and when, where and how people vote in local elections. Afterwards, students learn about voter turnout and barriers to electoral participation, and reflect on whether any barriers may be relevant to them in the future. In the *Consolidation* activity, students create a social media style video about whether they believe citizens should vote or whether they plan to vote in the future.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate the importance of voting in elections;
- explain key information related to voting in local elections;
- analyze barriers to voting in elections; and,
- articulate reasons for voting in a persuasive manner.

Starter

Save the last word

1. Distribute one index card or paper to each student. Introduce the activity by posing the following question: *Does voting matter?*

2. Watch the "Why Voting Matters" video and ask students to select one quote or reason for voting that stood out to them. They should write down the quote or reason on the index card. You may want to play the video twice in order to support this selection.

3. Ask students to explain why they chose the reason they did from the video by writing an explanation on the back of the card (e.g., what it meant to them, reminded them of, how it connects to prior learning).

4. Divide students into groups of three. Invite one student to read their chosen reason to rest of their group. Then ask the other two students to discuss the reason. Why do they think it was chosen? Is it meaningful for them? If so, why? After a few minutes, ask the student to read the back of their index card or to explain why they picked the reason and what it means for them. Repeat until each student has a turn sharing their selected quote/reason.

Activities

1. Explain to students that voting in local elections is done by secret ballot (Slide Deck 8). Voters mark their ballot behind a privacy screen and fold their ballot to conceal their choice. Using 'Think Pair Share', have students reflect on one or more of the following questions:

   - Why is secrecy important?
   - What could happen if elections were held publicly?
   - Why is it important to ensure a fair and impartial electoral process?

2. Using Slide Deck 8, review key aspects of the voting process in local elections in British Columbia.

   Guiding questions:

   - Who is qualified to vote in British Columbia local elections?
   - What is the voters list?
   - What are different ways that voters can cast their ballot?
   - How do I mark my ballot?

3. Explain the term 'voter turnout' (Slide Deck 8) and various statistics from elections in British Columbia.

   Review:

   - Voter turnout is the percentage of eligible electors or registered voters that cast ballots in an election.
   - Having the right to vote doesn't always mean that a person will show up at the polls to cast a ballot.

   TEACHER NOTE
   Voter turnout data for your municipality may be available online and, if available, would provide for a more relevant discussion on turnout.

4. Provide copies of Activity 8.1 and give students a few minutes to complete it. Ask students to answer each question as honestly as they can.

   TEACHER NOTE
   Encourage students to take the survey home and have a discussion with their parents.

5. Review some key research findings about voting and barriers to voting using Slide Deck 8. There are many different barriers to voting, including motivational barriers and access barriers.

   - Motivational barriers include low levels of political knowledge and interest in politics, lack of perceived importance, cynicism and lower sense of civic duty.
   - Access barriers include not knowing when and where to vote, lack of personal identification, challenges getting to the polling station, and language and literacy skills.

6. Independently or with a partner, have students reflect on how many zeros they recorded on the voting survey (Activity 8.1) and which barriers could affect their decision or ability to vote in the future.

Consolidation

Create a social media style video highlighting three main points as a response to one of the following questions. Consider using visual graphics and a tag line.

   - Should eligible citizens vote in elections?
   - Does voting matter?
   - Do you plan to vote in the future? Why?

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Remind students that new immigrants, adults who have difficulty reading, language learners, persons who are homeless, newly arrived refugees, and other specific groups may face challenges understanding or accessing the election system. • Keep the focus on ideas to increase access and the benefits our society gets from hearing different voices, not only on the disadvantages these groups face.
Accommodations	• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Every four years, voters across British Columbia decide who will represent their interests and lead their communities by electing the members of their municipal councils or regional district boards, school boards, parks boards or the Island Trust board.

The provincial government sets out common rules that all voters and candidates must follow. However, municipalities and regional districts are responsible for conducting the elections. Every municipality and regional district has a chief election officer who is in charge of running the election.

To be eligible to vote in the local government elections as a **resident or non-resident property elector**, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older when you register to vote, or 18 years or older on general voting day;
- Be a Canadian citizen;
- Have been a resident of B. C. for at least six months before you register to vote;
- Have either lived or owned property in the jurisdiction in which they intend to vote for at least 30 days before you register to vote; and
- Not be disqualified under the *Local Government Act*, or any other enactment, or by law from voting in a local election.

To be eligible to vote in a school trustee election in British Columbia, you must:

- Qualify either as a resident elector or a non-resident property elector;
- Be registered or deemed to be registered as an elector of the trustee electoral area; and
- Not be disqualified under the School Act, or other enactment or law, from voting in the election.

A person is not permitted to vote more than once in a trustee election for any one school district. *The School Act*

stipulates that a person may be the resident of only one trustee electoral area at a time, that being the area where the person lives, or if absent, where the person intends to return.

If you want to vote for the francophone education authority, you must be a member of the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) in addition to meeting the other requirements of a resident or non-resident property elector. You do not need to have a child in the school system to become a member of the CSF.

A local government must maintain and use its own list of electors if advance registration is available, unless it has adopted a by-law to implement same-day voter registration, or use the provincial voters list managed by Elections BC.

The local government-maintained **voters list** includes the names of resident electors and the names of non-resident property electors, whereas the provincial voters list only includes resident electors.

A resident elector is required to show two pieces of identification or sign a solemn declaration if their name does not already appear on the voters list. Non-resident property electors are required to register at the time of voting and show two pieces of identification, as well as the title of the property in relation to which they are voting. Contact your local government for more information about the voters list.

During the election period, you can find your voting place on your municipality or regional district website and through documentation mailed to voters.

Electors who are away, busy or unable to vote on voting day, have the option of participating in **advance voting**. One advance voting opportunity must be held 10 days prior to voting day. However, more advance voting days may be available. Please consult with your own municipality or regional district to find out how this works for your area.

Each municipality is responsible for conducting their election and determining the methods used. Options can include voting in person, by mail or through special voting opportunities held in hospitals, long-term care facilities or other locations where electors' mobility may be impaired. Please consult with your own municipality to find out how this works for your area.

Here are the basic steps to casting a ballot:

1. Once you confirm your eligibility, you are given a ballot.
2. Go behind a voting screen and mark your ballot.
3. Hand your folded ballot back to the voting clerk.
4. Your ballot is recorded and counted.

A **ballot** lists the names of the candidates running for each position in your local elections. There is a space beside each candidate's name on the ballot. You can mark your ballot with an X, shade the circle or use a checkmark. As long as you appropriately mark the ballot for your preferences and according to the number of choices, your votes will be counted.

Regarding the number of choices, if six council members are elected at large, you can vote for up to six candidates. Alternatively, if only one candidate is elected in a given race, you can only vote for one candidate. You can only vote for one type of school trustee (for your school district/electoral area, or for the francophone educational authority).

A **rejected ballot** is declared invalid by the voting officer because it was not properly marked. For example, the voter selected more than the number of candidates they were allowed to choose. In the case of local elections, one race or section may be declared valid and another may be deemed invalid.

A **spoiled ballot** is kept separate and never placed in the ballot box because it was mistakenly marked or torn and exchanged for a new ballot.