

Lesson 3

Politics



GUIDING QUESTIONS

1 What is politics?

2 Why should we respect others' opinions and viewpoints?

PURPOSE

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

In this lesson, students explore different opinions and viewpoints in a mock school improvement project. They use their powers of persuasion to try to convince their classmates to agree with their idea. Students are introduced to the concept of politics and the goals and actions of political parties and candidates. In the *Consolidation* activity, they reflect on politics and different opinions and viewpoints.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- express ideas and assess solutions to improve the learning experience at their school;
- work collaboratively with their peers to develop a 'pitch' about one idea;
- use persuasive language when trying to convince others;
- compare how different people may view and interpret the same issue;
- explain why we should respect others' opinions even if they are different from our own;
- describe the concepts of politics and elections.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- This lesson briefly talks about political parties, which is covered in more depth in Lesson 9.
- Supplies/Needs: chart paper (optional), video of pitch example (see lesson), copies of 3.1.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada.

Starter

1. Ask students what they know about politics and elections. Students should talk with a partner first to generate ideas, and then write down their thoughts in the K column on Activity 3.1 (What do I KNOW about politics?). You could also provide some key words to support their thinking (e.g., government, elections, politicians, issues, debate, political parties).
2. Now ask students to write down their next set of thoughts in the W column on Activity 3.1 (What do I WONDER about politics?).

Activities

1. Inform students that their school is applying for a grant (sum of money) to improve the school experience for students. You can present one or more of the following focus areas:
 - School yard greening/Outdoor learning
 - Well-being
 - Sports and recreation
 - Technology
2. Lead a class brainstorming session on improvement ideas. Record the ideas on the blackboard, chart paper or interactive white board.
3. As a class, group similar ideas together so that there are four to five main ideas. Help students form groups based on their interest in one of the main ideas.

Ask each group to discuss their idea in more detail and record the reasons why their idea should be considered. Questions to prompt discussion:

 - In what way does it solve a problem?
 - What would be the impact on students?
 - How many students would be affected by the idea?
4. Explain to students that since the money available is limited, only one idea will be selected from one school in the community. Ask each group to put together a pitch about their idea to share with the class. You can model a pitch or show them an example of a good pitch. (Exemplar – "The Drip Drop", Shark Tank).

5. Co-create criteria for a 'good pitch' with your students. Sample criteria can be found below.
 - One clear idea;
 - A great 'hook' to get the audience excited;
 - Short and to the point;
 - Shared with passion and excitement;
 - Explains why it is the best idea or what problem it will solve.
6. After the pitches, ask students to vote for the idea they liked the most. You can do this through a show of hands or a secret ballot. Tell students that they cannot pick their own idea in this activity or that they have to pick their second favourite idea. However, in a real election, candidates are allowed to vote for themselves.
7. Review the concept of politics and elections. Make clear connections to the school improvement activity.
 - 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 who share similar beliefs and goals about society and government. 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.
 - Political parties and candidates try to convince voters to support their ideas and vision. Citizens express their choices through voting.
 - Politics can be described as the activities, ideas and actions that are used to gain and maintain power, or the ways that citizens try to influence a government's actions or decisions.

Consolidation

Have a brief closing discussion and/or ask students to write a reflection on one or more of the following questions:

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

Assessment For Student Learning

Ask students to write down their thoughts in the L column on Activity 3.1 (What did I LEARN about politics?).