

Lesson 9

Political Parties



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How do I learn about the political parties?
- 2 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 form a government through an election. The role of citizens is to investigate which issues matter most 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 views on specific issues. After reviewing the concept of political parties, students work in groups to research one of Canada's political parties. Each group prepares information about the party's vision, their leader and platform. In the *Consolidation* activity, 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, students can:

- voice their opinion on political issues;
- explain the role of political parties in our democracy;
- 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.

Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- 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 keep their politics personal. Remind students that opinions should be respected, even if they differ from their own.
- Consider using a word cloud generator (such as Wordle or Word Art) to help students simplify or summarize political party messages.
- Supplies/Needs: Print or create signs (9.1), copies of 9.2 (or 9.3, alternatively), copies of 9.4, internet access.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: studentvote.ca/canada.

Starter

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” (see Activity 9.1 for printable signs).
2. Read out a statement and ask students to vote with their feet by walking to the sign that fits with their opinion. Choose statements you feel students 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 opinion, 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 eat all day long at school, not just at breaks.
- Students should not be able to access YouTube at school.
- 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.
- The government should be small and provide fewer services so that we don't have to pay a lot of money to the government (taxes).

Activities

1. Review the purpose of **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 are made up of members of the community. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party.
2. Divide students into groups and assign each a political party (ideally one that is running a candidate in your riding). Ask students to research their political party using campaign literature, party websites, social media channels, news media and *Pollenize Canada 2019* (pollenize.org/canada). Provide copies of Activity 9.2 to support the research.

Guiding questions:

- What is the party's slogan and/or key messages?
- Who is the party leader?
- What are the party's major ideas? What actions are they promising to take?
- Who seems to be the target audience of the party?
- What is the party's vision for Canada?

As an alternative to Activity 9.2, students can work individually or in small groups to explore a specific election issue and compare the positions of the political parties.

3. Using the information collected, each group will create a presentation and promotional materials about their assigned 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 planned actions they would take if elected (consider using the same three issues across all parties)
- 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.

Consolidation

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's message or vision do I support the most and why?
- Did your opinion change of any of the political parties after learning about them? If so, how?
- 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?
- What else would I like to know? How would I find out more?

Extended Learning

Have students complete the *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* (youth.votecompass.com/can). This is a political spectrum tool, which helps young people familiarize themselves with federal political issues and different ideological positions. At the end of the survey, the *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* tool indicates

your position on the political spectrum so that you can see where you fit compared to other students and people from the general public who are aligned with the political parties at the federal level.

TEACHER NOTES

- Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It is estimated to take 15-20 min.
- Reinforce to students that there are no right or wrong answers, but the questions are meant to encourage reflection on their political views.
- Background information has been included, along with definitions, to help students better understand the issues and terms. Consider reviewing some terms in advance.
- Analytics and summary data are provided at the end of the survey. Give students time to analyze their results (the area where they locate themselves on the spectrum, how they compare to people aligned with the federal political parties).

Assessment For Student Learning

After the activities, have students complete the reflection card (Activity 9.4). "The first thing I will share with my family tonight is..."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals who share a similar political ideology and goals for society 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.

The political spectrum provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on political issues, as well as political parties.

The political spectrum can be viewed with two intersecting scales: one for economic/fiscal policies (left-right) and one for social/personal policies (progressive-conservative).

Canadians who are **left-leaning on economic issues** tend to support higher taxes and more government spending, more government involvement, and more social services.

Canadians who are **right-leaning on economic issues** tend to support low taxes and less government spending, less government intervention, and the free market.

Canadians who are **progressive on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate the promotion of social justice issues by changing established practices and institutions. An example of such a policy could be addressing inequities by giving preferential treatment to disadvantaged groups.

Canadians who are **conservative on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate the preservation of traditional values and established institutions. An example could be ensuring that everyone follows the same established rules and has equal access.

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 plans 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 the entire country, and evaluating how the different political parties will address them.