

# Lesson 6: Researching the Parties and Candidates



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do we have political parties?
- 2 How can I learn about the political parties?
- 3 Which political party best represents my views?

## OVERVIEW

The job of voters is to research and compare the candidates, the political parties they belong to, and their campaign promises.

In Part One, students participate in a 'Four Corners' activity to explore different viewpoints on various topics and practice defending their opinions. They then watch a video about the role of political parties and how they campaign for support. After looking up which candidates are running for election, students create a Word Web and brainstorm how to decide who to vote for.

In Part Two, students share insights from family discussions about voting and rank important election issues in groups. They research the parties and local candidates using various sources, creating profiles to compare key messages, promises, and visions. Groups present their findings, followed by a reflection on party platforms and election issues through writing or discussion.

## LEARNING GOALS

We are learning to:

- voice our opinion on political issues;
- describe the role of political parties and candidates during an election;
- evaluate issues of importance; and
- research, synthesize and critically analyze information about the candidates and political parties.

## Tips for Teachers

- It is recommended that students complete Lesson 5 before completing this lesson to better evaluate information sources and political messaging.
  - Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
  - The lesson is divided into two parts, should you choose to deliver the activities over multiple days.
  - Some students may jump at the opportunity to share their opinions and try to convince others to adopt their choices, while others may prefer to keep their politics personal. Remind students that views should be respected, even if they differ.
  - Consider using a word cloud generator (such as Wordle or Word Art) or an AI tool to help students simplify or summarize political party platforms or messages. Attach or paste the information you want to simplify, rather than asking the AI tool to find it for you.
3. Ask a few students to explain their choice. After each student defends their opinion, give the other students the chance to change their opinion/corner of the room, if others persuade them.
  4. Repeat as many times as you like.

## Supplies/Needs

- “Introduction to politics and political parties” video
- Slide Deck 6
- Digital access to or copies of Activity 6.1 and 6.2 (or 6.3, alternatively) and 6.4
- All digital files, videos and slide decks can be found at: [studentvote.ca/canada](http://studentvote.ca/canada) (Classroom Resources)

## PART ONE

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### Starter

In this ‘Four Corners’ activity, students explore the idea that people have different beliefs and viewpoints. They are asked to take a stand on a specific topic and defend their position.

1. Place signs in the four corners of the room: “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” “Strongly Disagree”.
2. Read out a statement and ask students to vote by moving to one of the corners of the classroom. Choose statements you feel students will be comfortable answering in front of their classmates, starting with school-based statements.

For example:

- School uniforms should be mandatory for all students.

- Homework should be banned.
  - Zoos should be abolished.
  - Companies that pollute our air and water should face consequences.
  - The government should spend more money on national defence to protect our country.
  - Canada should give financial aid to other countries.
  - The government should be small and provide fewer services, so that we can pay less taxes.
3. Ask a few students to explain their choice. After each student defends their opinion, give the other students the chance to change their opinion/corner of the room, if others persuade them.
  4. Repeat as many times as you like.

## Essential Learning

1. Watch the “[Introduction to politics and political parties](#)” video and review the role of political parties and candidates during elections.
  - **Politics** is the way that people living in groups make decisions and influence their government.
  - Anywhere people live together there will be different opinions about how things should work.
  - People with similar political views often come together as a team and work towards their shared goals. These teams are called **political parties**.
  - Anyone above the required age, usually 14 years old, can be a party member.
  - Party members choose a leader for their party. They also help choose candidates to run for election.
  - During elections, political parties usually release a **political platform** or party platform, which outlines the promises and actions the party will take if they are elected.
2. Demonstrate to students where they can find out which candidates are running for election in your school’s electoral district. Visit Elections Canada at [www.elections.ca](http://www.elections.ca).
3. Share the question: How should we decide who to vote for?

As a class, create a Word Web and brainstorm questions to guide your research around this question.

To help students generate questions, you can write the following prompts on the board: local candidate, party leader, political party and platform, specific issues.

Sample responses:

- Local candidate - Who is the best candidate for the job of Member of Parliament? How have past experiences prepared them for this job?
  - Party leader - Which leader has the best vision for Canada? Which leader will be the best Prime Minister?
  - Political/party platform - What major actions will the party take if elected?
  - Specific issues - Which issues are important to me, my family, and our community? How will the parties address these issues?
4. Ask students to go home and ask their family members two questions to be shared in the next class. This can happen informally or using copies of Activity 6.1.
- How do you decide who to vote for in federal elections?
  - What issues do you think are most important in this election?

## PART TWO

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### Applied Learning

1. Invite students to share any information they have learned from their discussions with family members about how they decide who to vote for and which issues they think are most important in this election.
2. Divide students into groups and have them rank the issues on Activity 6.1. Afterward, ask each group to provide their top three choices and tally the results for the class. If desired, the top three issues can be used for the research in the next part.
3. Explain to students that they will research the candidates/parties running in the school's electoral district. The goal is to collect similar information for each candidate/party so that it's easier to compare and evaluate them. Review the list of sources available for this research:
  - Party websites and social media accounts (YouTube, X, Facebook, TikTok)
  - Candidate websites and social media accounts
  - News websites
  - Other credible sources that summarize the party platforms

- Student Vote resources ("Party Leader Q&A" videos, Pollenize)
4. Building on the discussion from Part One, co-create an outline for producing a candidate/party profile and format (physical or digital). Alternatively, you can use the research template (Activity 6.2).

For example:

- Who is the local candidate? What is their background and experience?
- What are the candidate or party's key messages?
- What are the party's slogans? What is the party trying to communicate?
- Who is the party's leader? What is their vision for Canada?
- What are the party's major ideas? What actions are they promising to take if elected?
- What issues are important to our class or community? How will the party address these issues if they are elected?

As an alternative to this activity, students can work individually or in small groups to explore a specific election issue and compare the policies and positions of the political parties (Activity 6.3).

5. Have each group share their profile/presentation with the rest of the class.
6. Afterward, allow students time to review the presentations independently or through a Gallery Walk.

### Consolidation

1. Ask students to write a reflection about one or more of the following questions.
  - Which party's message or vision do you support the most and why?
  - Did your opinion of any political parties change after learning about them? If so, how?
  - Which election issue is most important to you or your family? How does each party plan to address this issue?
  - Which party's platform do you agree with the most?
  - What else would you like to know? How would you find out more?
2. Ask students to complete Activity 6.4 and share it with their parents.

## Extended Learning

### Activity A: The Leaders' Debate

Have students watch the federal leaders' debate at home and/or watch clips in the classroom and complete Activity 6.5. To prepare for the viewing, discuss the qualities of a good debater and review the party leaders participating in the debate. You can also use the "Party Leader Q&A" videos on the Student Vote Canada website, in advance.

#### TEACHER NOTES

The entire debate may last close to two hours. The following day, many news media outlets will offer segments or highlights.

### Activity B: Youth Vote Compass

Have students complete the *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* ([youth.votecompass.com/can](http://youth.votecompass.com/can)). This is a political spectrum tool, which helps young people reflect on their political views. 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 are placed compared to the average voter of the various political parties.

#### TEACHER NOTES

- This tool is designed for grades 7-12. Additional support may be required depending on age.
- Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It is estimated to take 15-20 min.
- Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers; 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 average voter of the federal political parties).

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

During an election campaign, a political party, its candidates, and its campaign teams organize to develop and share their party's ideas and vision.

A **political platform** is a set of declared principles, policies, and plans regarding government and public issues.

Candidates and parties use a communications strategy that incorporates paid, earned, and owned media, as well as outreach activities and events to spread their message.

- **Paid media** includes publicity that has been purchased to bring a message to an audience. Examples include print, broadcast, and social media advertising, and direct mail campaigns.
- **Owned media** consists of communications managed by an individual, group, or organization through its own platforms, such as websites, blogs, or social media accounts.
- **Earned media** consists of media coverage by third parties, such as news organizations, or mentions shared through external social media channels or word of mouth.

- **Campaign outreach** includes lawn signs, public events, door-to-door canvassing, town halls and debates.

Elections present an opportunity for citizens to explore societal issues and participate in constructive dialogue about priorities and public policies.

This process includes establishing which issues are most important to you, your community, and the country, and evaluating how the different political parties will address them.

It is the job of voters to gather, interpret and analyze campaign information; draw conclusions; and make their voting decisions.

## Questions to Help Guide Assessment

SECTION	GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
<b>Starter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are students reflecting on their views about the statements?</li> <li>• Are students respectful of each other's opinions?</li> <li>• Can students appreciate that people have different political views?</li> </ul>
<b>Essential Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do students understand the role of political parties and the different ways that political parties and candidates campaign for their support?</li> <li>• Can students propose questions to support their research and help frame how they would decide who to vote for?</li> </ul>
<b>Applied Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can students identify issues that matter to them?</li> <li>• Are students posing questions to spark new areas of interest while researching their candidate/party?</li> <li>• Are students presenting information that is accurate and informative?</li> </ul>
<b>Consolidation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do student reflections demonstrate critical thinking and analysis of the candidates and political parties? Are they making connections to their own priorities?</li> <li>• Can students communicate their knowledge to their family members?</li> </ul>

## Adaptations and Supports

<b>Individual Education Plans</b>	<p><b>Modifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give lots of thinking time during the <i>Starter</i> activity.</li> <li>• Use an AI tool or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages.</li> <li>• Review key terminology in advance of reviewing party promises, such as 'economy' and 'policy'.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enrichment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to offer their own political statements for the <i>Starter</i> activity.</li> <li>• Have students research the issue most important to them and see how the media reports on the different positions of each party.</li> </ul>
<b>Language Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat terms and rephrase statements in different ways.</li> <li>• Use an AI tool or word cloud generator to simplify political party messages.</li> <li>• Review keywords in advance and use visuals where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written alternatives or digital polls.</li> <li>• Select issues that matter most to your students or the community in which they live when researching the party's promises or actions they plan to take.</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility &amp; Accommodations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a variety of materials, both print and online, for various accessibility needs.</li> </ul>