

Lesson: How do the principles of democracy apply to my life?

Big idea

Canada is a nation of many peoples, languages, regions, and perspectives. Democracy in Canada has a long history, stretching back to Indigenous talking circles in North America. Democracy is not static; it continues to evolve and includes dark moments where the principles of democracy were not extended to certain groups throughout history. Democracy is practised through the structures and processes of our governments but also in how Canadians live their everyday lives. It is not a guarantee; democracy can be challenged and weakened. However, it can also be strengthened and improved. It is important that all Canadians are equal participants in Canadian democracy and understand what that means.

Curriculum connections

B1. Civic Issues, Democratic Values: describe beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, and explain how they are related to civic action and to one's position on civic issues

B1.2 describe fundamental beliefs and values associated with democratic citizenship in Canada, including democracy, human rights, freedom, and the rule of law, identifying some of their key historical foundations, and explain ways in which these beliefs and values are reflected in citizen actions

B3. Rights and Responsibilities: analyse key rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, in both the Canadian and global context, and some ways in which these rights are protected or may be infringed upon

B3.2 analyse key responsibilities associated with Canadian citizenship

Learning goals

I am learning to:

- identify the foundational ideas of democracy
- identify the principles of democracy in the Constitution of Canada and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code
- apply the principles of democracy to my daily life

Success criteria

I can:

- explain what democracy means to me
- provide evidence of the principles of democracy in the Constitution of Canada and the Charter, as well as the Ontario Human Rights Code
- analyze to what degree my school puts the principles of democracy into practice

Inquiry question

How do the principles of democracy apply to my life?

Required materials

1. Appendix A Student handout -
**Fact sheet: [The Constitution of Canada](#),
Fact sheet: [The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#), Fact sheet: [The Ontario Human Rights Code](#)**
2. Appendix B Student handout -
[The principles of Canadian democracy](#)
3. Appendix C Teacher key -
[The principles of Canadian democracy](#)
4. Slide deck -
[Principles of Democracy](#)*
5. Appendix D Student handout -
[Democracy report card](#)
6. Appendix E Student handout -
[Exit card](#)

*Available online at: elections.on.ca/learning

Minds on

1. Organize students into partners or small groups. Tell them today's lesson is about the principles of democracy. Post the definition of "principle" in a visible spot in the class.
 - a. A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior or for a chain of reasoning.
2. In their partnerships or small groups, students will discuss what they think the fundamental beliefs are that provide the foundation for a democracy. In other words, what are the core foundational ideas that democracy is built on? You can warm students up by having them suggest words or phrases that they think of when they hear the word democracy. Some examples students might suggest are:
 - a. Human rights
 - b. Freedoms
 - c. Elections
 - d. Government is limited
 - e. Accountability
 - f. Equality
 - g. Minorities are protected
 - h. Majority rules
3. Students should record their thinking on sticky notes or chart paper to capture what they think forms the foundation of democracy.

4. Explain that each group will create a bumper sticker that reflects some key aspect or big idea that is a principle of democracy. Provide 8-10 minutes to create the bumper sticker. Provide pieces of paper cut into the shape of a bumper sticker to students. If students need inspiration, do a quick Google search for funny or clever bumper stickers. Encourage students to illustrate and add a design to their bumper stickers if they have time.
 5. After the designated time, ask each group to choose a speaker to share its bumper sticker. Here are some examples students could come up with:
 - a. Gov't works 4 u
 - b. Fundamental Rights & Equality Everywhere (F.R.E.E)
 - c. I brake for human rights
 - d. Equality rocks my socks off
 6. Post the bumper stickers in a visible spot for the remainder of the lesson.
2. Using the handout, **Principles of Canadian democracy** (Appendix B), each small group will consider what values and principles are evident in the documents they are assigned.
 3. Discuss as a class what principles are clear in the documents that form the foundation of Canadian democracy. Encourage students to provide evidence from the documents. A teacher key has been provided.
 4. Review the principles of democracy using the **slide deck*** provided. Students can add to their handouts any principles the class did not identify and try to find evidence in the documents.

*Available online at: elections.on.ca/learning

Consolidation

1. Students can work in teams or individually on the **Democracy Report Card** handout (Appendix D). Remind students to not just look for how the principles are put into practice in their school environment but also the challenges in doing so. Students should consider:
 - a. Student Council/Student Government
 - b. Parent Council
 - c. Student Trustees
 - d. Trustees
 - e. Classroom and School Policies

Activity

1. Provide students with the fact sheets on the **Constitution of Canada**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, and the **Ontario Human Rights Code** (Appendix A). The teacher may wish to divide the class into separate groups focusing on one of the documents and then sharing their findings or creating groups of students looking at all the documents together or designating one person to each document and then sharing in small groups (groups of three).

Teacher note: *This can be as intensive as the teacher wishes to encourage. Students can use the school agenda book, school website, school newsletters, board website and even news articles about the school board as sources. They can also ask questions of school administrators, teachers and officials to help them make their evaluation.*

2. Distribute a copy of the **Exit card** (Appendix E) – Is democracy healthy and strong at your school?
 - a. Students assess to what degree their school puts the principles of democracy into practice.
 - b. Students give their school a final rating based on their analysis.

Assessment

1. The teacher can use the **Democracy report card** [handout](#) to assess student learning. Concepts that seem challenging for students can be addressed in the next class or lesson. The teacher can also use student work to create an exemplar featuring strong examples of their responses for all students to review.
2. The teacher can use the **Exit card** [as an assessment of learning](#).