

Lesson Plan or Classroom Activity

Title: Today's the Day to Have Your Say: Using Mandate Letters to Cabinet Ministers to Shape Understanding

Audience: Grades 4-6 (can be adapted for older students)

Overview: Through the application of questioning techniques, gain a deeper understanding of the diversity in 21st century parliamentary democracy.

Big Ideas:

- Grade 5 Social Studies: Canadian institutions and government reflect the challenge of our regional diversity
- Grade 6 Social Studies: Systems of government vary in their respect for human rights and freedoms
- Grades 4, 5, 6 Language Arts: Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens

Curricular Competencies (Grades 4, 5, 6):

Students are expected to be able to do the following:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions (Social Studies)
- Ask questions, corroborate inferences, and draw conclusions about the content and origins of a variety of sources, including mass media (evidence) (Language Arts)

Content:

- Grade 5: levels of government (First Peoples, federal, provincial, and municipal), their main functions, and sources of funding
- Grade 6: roles of individuals, governmental organizations, and NGOs, including groups representing Indigenous peoples.

Competency Statements (Positive Personal and Cultural Competency):

- I am able to identify the different groups I belong to
- I can tell what is important to me
- I can explain what my values are and how they affect the choices I make

Activities and Methods:

Introduction: Pose the question to students, “What are three responsibilities of a teacher?” Have students meet and share using a *Think/Pair/Share* model.

Activity: Discuss that the Premier decides the responsibilities of the Minister of Education. Discuss the purpose of a mandate letter. Look at example/structure/format of the Minister of Education’s current mandate letter.

Divide students into four groups. Look at the four most relevant points to students (1, 3, 10, and 12). Have them present the point to their peers, with a focus on how that mandate influences them.

Point 1- “Balance your ministerial budget to control spending, and ensure an overall balanced budget for the province of British Columbia.” (Only spend what you can afford)

Point 3- “Work with BC Teachers’ Federation to improve the quality of professional development for teachers in the province.” (What do teachers need to learn about to make us better teachers)

Point 10- “Continue to support our government’s initiatives to erase bullying.”

Point 12- “Continue to implement our government’s seismic upgrade program for BC schools to ensure our educational facilities can protect those learning and working in the event of a major earthquake in our province.”

Preparation (by teacher and by student):

- Have copies of mandate letter available
- Chart paper and markers
- Frame for self-reflection and self-assessment. Are students able to recognize their personal connection to government mandates?

Duration of Activity: 50 Minutes

Materials and Resources:

Executive Council of the BC Government:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/cabinet/cabinet-ministers>

*Includes biographies and mandate letters for each member of the executive council

Minister of Education, Mike Bernier, mandate letter:

http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/government/ministries-organizations/premier-cabinet-mlas/minister-letter/mike_bernier_mandate_letter.pdf

Extensions:

- Have students interview and record (data collection) others ideas around topics of responsibility
- Have students compose their own mandate letter and send to the Ministry of Education
- Have students rewrite the Minister of Education's mandate letter in more kid-friendly terms
- Examine a variety of mandate letters for other Cabinet Ministers
- Have students send illustrations and/or written work highlighting how the Minister of Education's mandates personally affect them

Evaluation of Activity:

- Are students able to connect the Minister of Education's mandates to their own personal experience? This is demonstrated through their presentations.

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NOTE: *The ideas and opinions expressed in this classroom activity belong to their authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. The Parliamentary Education Office only edits for clarity.*

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