



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia Teachers' Institute
on Parliamentary Democracy

Learning Activity:

Provoke students to consider alternative versions of a democratic government, learning about current and alternative systems along the way.

Grade level: Social Studies 8-10 / Political Studies 12

Big Ideas: Modeling the process of how change occurs – if we were to change some aspects of the BC system, what impacts might that have?

How would we change our government processes?

Using a problem-based project approach, there are 6 stages which can be explored over days or weeks.

1. Develop Background Knowledge of BC's Current System
2. Challenge: How would you change this process within the goals of democracy?
3. Expanding Ideas: Building Background Knowledge of Other Systems
4. Challenge 2: Developing Draft into a Proposal
5. Sharing/presenting
6. Project Reflection

Curricular Competencies:

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyse ideas; and communicate findings and decisions (Gr.8-12)
- Explain different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events, and compare the values, worldviews, and beliefs of human cultures and societies in different times and places (perspective) (Gr.8)
- Assess how prevailing conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, or developments (cause and consequence) (Gr.9)
- Explain and infer different perspectives on past or present people, places, issues, or events by considering prevailing norms, values, worldviews, and beliefs (perspective) (Gr.10)
- Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different political institutions and organisations at particular times and places (continuity and change) (Political Studies 12)

Core Competencies:

- Communications: Students engage in informal and structured conversations in which they listen, contribute, develop understanding and relationships, and learn to consider diverse perspectives.
- Critical Thinking: Students learn to engage in inquiry when they identify and investigate questions, challenges, key issues, or problematic situations in their studies, lives, and communities and in the media.
- Social Awareness and Responsibility: Involve the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of connections among people, including between people and the natural environment.

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.

This project aims to open student minds (self) to innovative possibilities that increase equity and democratic principles for all citizens. The invitation to use Dr. Brokenleg's [Circle of Courage](#) is intended to suggest one way to increase the depth of engagement with this Principle.

Overview of the learning opportunity:

Objective: to provoke students to consider alternative versions of a democratic government, and learn about current and alternative systems along the way.

Hook: Stage a class vote to introduce the concept and challenges of group decision-making. (see examples in Appendix)

1. **Developing Background Knowledge of BC's Current System:** Solidifying Understanding of current government and legislative processes.

Objective: Building (building foundation) or Engaging Prior (review) Background Knowledge of Current System

- *Follow a piece of legislation (student idea or real) through our current process (Bill to Law).*
- *Summarise through graphic representation (flow chart, infographic...). Identify steps in the process & who is involved in each step (roles).*

2. **Challenge 1: How would you change this process within the goals of democracy?**

Objective: Engage critical & creative thinking toward innovation. Develop an understanding of democracy and democratic values

- a. Define democracy: create a statement of democratic goal/ideal: what SHOULD it look like in action. Refer to the constitution & other docs
 - b. What issues can we identify in the current democratic system?
3. *In small groups, students collaboratively define what democracy is and what it could look like. Presentations on chart paper.*
 4. *Groups trade papers. Groups then ask questions about specific points.*
 5. *Whole class discussion - Use these questions to drive a discussion on perceived issues with the current democratic system in BC. Extend: Redesign this process, what would you change? Represent ideas as a DRAFT in a new document (11 x 17 mapping of ideas: choice)*

3. **Expanding Ideas: Building Background Knowledge of Other Systems:** Consensus government/ Non-party systems

Objective: Expand student thinking. Building (building foundation) or Engaging Prior (review) Background Knowledge of real examples of consensus and non-party systems Including Indigenous forms of Government.

- *Have each student find 2 alternative forms of government and compare them (T-Chart, Venn Diagram,...).*
- *Students create a Pros/Cons chart to analyse the different forms they have chosen.*

4. **Challenge 2: Developing Draft into a Proposal**

Objective: Develop the draft further as a proposal for an alternative system of government. This is a prototype for collegial collaboration: develop criteria for clear communication (differentiate from polished presentation).

- *Students return to small groups. Groups first design their ideal model of democracy. Have them reference which models they have taken their ideas from.*
- *Groups develop a process for how legislation is passed under their democratic system. Have them highlight changes from the current system.*
- *Groups refine their model into a product they are capable of presenting (digital, visual, written, spoken,...)*

5. **Sharing/presenting:** in a way that fits the class, groups & setting (gallery walk, oral presentations...)

Viewers have a role of structured, specific feedback on ideas and communication of ideas (focus feedback - and teacher assessment- on learning standards being taught).

CRITICAL VIEWING: They are to view critically to identify strengths and stretches. Use pre-established criteria (see above).

- *At the end of the presentation, Students may ASK clarifying questions: QUESTIONS ONLY TO GET MORE INFO. Then, viewers are given 10-40 min (this could be extended as a more key, fulsome area of learning) for written feedback for that group. At the same time, presenters complete a self-assessment.*

6. **Project Reflection:** Groups use criteria, self-reflection, & peer feedback to reflect on their project idea. Identify areas in their draft to redevelop with or WITHOUT solutions (naming "limitations")

Suggestions for challenge-based or inquiry and cross-curricular integration

Have students and groups redevelop the project and create a more formal proposal to the local MLA or BC Government Ministry or Parliamentary Committee. Check for any active BC Government Committees or Parliamentary Committees as many have processes for public and youth input.

- Have International Students focus on the governmental system of their country rather than the Canadian/BC system.
- Engage with MLAs to discuss student proposals.

Learner self-reflection questions

Project reflection is an embedded part of this project-based learning challenge.

- What have I learned about critically and creatively looking at parliamentary systems?
- What have I learned about communicating with others?
- What have I learned about giving and receiving feedback?

Resources:**Introduction:** Governance and Democracy

- [Democracy in BC - Learning Portal \(royalbcmuseum.bc.ca\)](https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/learning-portal)
- [Democracy-and-Parliament-English.pdf \(leg.bc.ca\)](https://leg.bc.ca/legislation-and-parliament-english)

Different democratic systems:

- Direct democracy: [This is how Switzerland's direct democracy works | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/articles/2016/02/25/this-is-how-switzerlands-direct-democracy-works/)
- Representative Democracy (Canada): [Representative Government | The Canadian Encyclopedia](https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/representative-government)
- Government & Democracy: [Student Vote Canada](https://www.studentvote.ca/)
- Democratic Principles: [CIVIX - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- Indigenous Self-Government: [Self-Government | BC Treaty Commission](https://www.bctreatycommission.ca/)
 - EXAMPLES:
 - Wet'suwet'en: <http://www.wetsuweten.com/culture/governance/>
 - Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation governance: https://fngovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/IGR_SquamishLilwat.pdf

Consensus government:

- NWT: <https://www.ntassembly.ca/visitors/what-consensus>
- Nunavut: [Canadian Parliamentary Review - Article \(revparl.ca\)](https://www.revparl.ca/)

How legislation is passed:

- British Columbia: [How Bills are Passed \(leg.bc.ca\) or https://www.leg.bc.ca/dyl/Pages/How-Bills-are-Passed.aspx](https://leg.bc.ca/dyl/Pages/How-Bills-are-Passed.aspx)

Appendix: *These flexible activities can be used to engage students in decision-making processes, pitfalls, and options. They can be used at multiple points in the lesson.*

Decision-Making Brainstorm: As a class, we have to decide on how to spend \$100. What are some different ways that we could decide? Discuss options (ex. Teacher decides, A small committee decides, The majority votes, consensus, etc.)

Promote a Chocolate Bar: Divide class into groups and assign each group a type of chocolate bar to promote. This is followed up by a secret class vote on the best chocolate bar for everyone to eat next class. Reflect on the process: Is this the best way to decide on a chocolate bar for everyone? What if someone had a severe allergy... would that change the process?

Resolve Controversial Issues: Create a dress code policy: Start by leaving the process 'open' and watch some chaos as students attempt to decide on something without any given process. Then provide a structure for decision-making: groups propose ideas and then we vote on the best option. Reflect on the process - was it fair? Equity review: Are all members of society represented in our discussion? Who's missing?

Create a Class Policy: Create a new 'late policy' for the class: Divide the class into parties. Have a 'charter of rights and freedoms' to guide the decision-making process. Each party must vote together. The teacher can play the roles of 'royal consent' and/or 'judicial oversight'. Equity review: Were any "voices" of our community missing? Who were absent or unable to participate

Assessment: Standards Based Assessment Rubric Created by Ecole Alpha Secondary

<http://blogs.sd41.bc.ca/alpha-socialstudies/files/2021/04/SBA-Grade-10-2020-2.pdf>

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