

A. Lesson Overview

Curriculum Links

Social Studies, History, Law, Language Arts, Leadership

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Inquire into and research policies regarding the democratic rights of people with disabilities in Canada.
- Compare and research policies regarding the democratic rights of people with disabilities in Canada versus other countries.
- Critically question the democratic process of voting.
- Define the terms accessibility and barriers, and identify these elements in their own classroom or school.

Opening Motivator

Students participate in a mock vote with several students' opinions eliminated because of their demographic.

Main Activity

Students research and think critically about the accommodations made in Canada and in other countries for people who cannot access polling stations.

Conclusion

Students present their findings to their peers in small groups in a jigsaw format.

Materials

- Computers with internet access
- Optional student copies of:
 - **Accessibility to Vote Comparison Sheet** (p.35 of Social Studies)
 - **Expert Notes** (p.36-37 of Social Studies)

Lesson Length

90 minutes

Assessment

Use **Assessment Tool** (p.9 of Overview)

Suggested Student Project/Extension Activities

1. Challenge students to go with their parents or guardians to an upcoming election. Is the polling station accessible? If so, what kinds of accommodations have been made? If not, what kind of accommodations should be made?
2. Students visit their local municipal government buildings or provincial legislative building. Using the accessibility checklist found in the *Investigating Accessibility* lesson (p.32-37 of Design and Technology), students review whether or not these buildings are accessible.





B. Lesson Plan

Opening Motivator - Hold a mock vote in your classroom

- 1. Inform students that they will be voting today.** Choose a topical class issue or give students the choice of voting for the “Red” party or the “White” party. Each student writes their preference on a slip of paper.
- 2. When collecting the votes from the students, intentionally leave 14-15% of the class’ votes out of the ballot box.** (This is approximately the percentage of people in Canada with disabilities.) Student volunteers count the votes and announce the results.
3. When students who didn’t get their vote in the box complain, apologize and tell them that “unfortunately you were unable to get inside the polling station because the building was not accessible. Some of you were unable to leave your homes or even see the ballot because there were no accommodations made for your disability.”

Discussion Questions

- Would the result of our election have been different if everyone’s votes had counted?
- Why is it important that everyone’s vote counts even if it doesn’t change the result?
- Why is this democratic?
- What do you think Canada is doing to make accommodations for people with disabilities?
- Are countries that give everyone the right to vote but don’t make accommodations for all their citizens to vote truly democratic nations? Why or why not?

Term to consider

Accessibility: the extent to which a physical space, such as a building, does not have any barriers, allowing anyone the opportunity to use and benefit from its existence, including people with a vision, hearing or physical disability.

Strategies or Tips

This lesson could follow the “Investigating Accessibility” lesson (p.27-42 of Design and Technology). If you decide to use that lesson, ask students to consider the following questions as a bridge:

- Was anyone surprised by the lack of, or abundance of, accessible features at the school? Which ones in particular?
- Is this information easily accessible?
- Would people with a disability who were coming to this school to vote know about the barriers that exist?

Main Activity: Investigating Accommodations

Students research the Elections Canada website to identify the accommodations made for people with a disability and compare them to other countries.

1. Split students into “home” groups of 4-5 students.

Assign or allow groups to choose a country to research. Suggestions for countries with information on accessibility or accommodations include:

- Canada: www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=vot&dir=spe&document=index&lang=e
- The UK: www.nidirect.gov.uk/voting-in-elections-for-people-with-disabilities
- Australia: www.aec.gov.au/Enrolling_to_vote/Special_Category/index.htm
- South Africa: <https://www.elections.org.za/content/For-Voters/Voting-aid-for-voters-with-disabilities-and-special-needs/>
- New Zealand: www.elections.org.nz/voters/get-ready-enrol-and-vote/enrol-and-vote-disability

The election websites listed below do not explicitly address accommodations made for voters with a disability. They may be useful to compare to countries that do make accommodations for their voters.

- Fiji: www.fijielections.com/Resources.html
- India: www.elections.in/
- Nigeria: www.inecnigeria.org/
- Malta: www.electoral.gov.mt/pageview.aspx?x