Overview

The aim of this lesson plan is to give teachers a range of ideas and activities to:

- Encourage students to be more aware of issues facing their community and how they can make their voices heard
- Review the different ways citizens can participate in the political process
- Review the origins, and start to understand the role of, political parties in Australia’s system of government
- Start to understand how government policy is shaped and developed
- Begin to consider the challenges of sustaining a resilient democracy and develop a case study of political participation
- Encourage student engagement with the Parliament of Victoria.

Curriculum Links

Victorian Curriculum F-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Learning Area</th>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Curriculum Code</th>
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| 9 & 10| Civics and citizenship | • Government and democracy  
     |                         |   - Discuss the role of political parties and independent representatives in Australia’s system of government and explain the process by which government policy is shaped and developed | VCCCG028          |
|       |                        | • Citizenship, Diversity and Identity  
     |                         |   - Discuss challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society | VCCCC036          |

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<th>Capabilities</th>
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| Critical and creative thinking | • Questions and Possibilities  
     |   - Investigate the characteristics of effective questions in different contexts to examine information | VCCCTQ043          |
Learning Goals

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

• Understand further the different ways citizens can participate in the political process and the strengths and weaknesses of different types of political participation
• Explore the origins, purposes, objectives and constituencies of political parties and research various political parties or interest groups in Victoria
• Evaluate the values of a political party in light of their own personal values
• Develop a case study of political participation: political parties or interest groups

Resources and Materials

Included for this lesson plan are:

• Teacher guide or summary
• Teacher instructions: learning activities
• Evaluate ways to take action and participate worksheet
• Comparing policies of the main parties worksheet
• Assessment task worksheet

You will need:

• Poster paper for the mind-map activity
• A4 paper for students to make pamphlets
• Student access to PowerPoint or another presentation software package if used
• Parliament posters: A set of posters introducing Members of the Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly, Members Born Overseas and Victorian Electorates. Free copies available by contacting educationinfo@parliament.vic.gov.au
• Access to the internet:
  • www.parliament.vic.gov.au to research purpose and nature of political parties
  • www.vec.vic.gov.au to research the steps required to register a political party
  • relevant external sites for additional research

Teacher background reference:

• www.parliament.vic.gov.au/committees/get-involved/making-a-submission
• www.vec.vic.gov.au/SchoolsAndCommunity/Schools.html
• passport.vec.vic.gov.au
Learning Activities Summary

1. Warm-up: Why should I care?
2. Participation mind mapping activity
3. Evaluating ways of participating
4. Political Parties: present your understanding (option: Power point presentation or assessment task)
5. Political Parties and me: Values match-up
6. Participating through Political Parties - How To Guide
7. Extension: It's Party Time! ... Starting My Own Political Party

Achievement Standard

By the end of these lessons students will meet the needs of the achievement standards in Levels 9 and 10 Civics and Citizenship by being able to:

- Explain some features of Australia’s system of government
- Start to identity and analyse the influences on people’s electoral choices
- Start to identity and evaluate a range of factors which sustain democratic societies
- Begin to understand and analyse ways they can be active and informed citizens
ASSESSMENT TASK: REPORT

Political parties – present your understanding

One of the ways students can take direct action in the political process is to join a political party. It is important for students to understand the purpose and nature of political parties, as well as understand the current political parties in Victoria.

By completing this task students will:
• Explore the origins, purposes, objectives and constituencies of political parties in Victoria
• Start to understand the role of political parties in Australia’s system of government
• Build their skills in research, comprehension and evaluation.

Resources:
• www.parliament.vic.gov.au
  • See About Parliament, go to Parliamentary System, go to Political Parties
  • See Members
  • Parliament posters
• Use the website of the political party you have chosen to research in detail - remember to focus on the Victorian Branch.

Answer the following focus questions:
1. What is a political party and explain the concept of a political party in simple terms.
2. What do we call it when two political parties join together to form government? What do you think could be some of the challenges when this happens? What could be some of the advantages?
3. Describe the history of one of these parties: The Labor Party (historically known as the Democratic Labor Party), the Liberal Party, the Nationals
4. Name the eight political parties currently represented in the Victorian Parliament. Include their name, logo and slogan where appropriate. Find out how many members of these parties are in the Legislative Assembly and how many are in the Legislative Council.
5. Choose one party to look at in more detail. Research and explain:
   • the leader
   • the party’s main platforms, ideals and polices - what do they believe in and stand for?
   • Analyse the symbolism of their logo.
   • Briefly outline the process you would have to go through to become a member of that party including any costs.

Independent members

Sometimes in Parliament members are elected as independents, that is, they are not part of a political party. Think about the advantages of being an independent member as well as any limitations or difficulties. There is one independent member in the current Parliament of Victoria, Suzanna Sheed. Find out as much as you about her including:
• How long she has been in Parliament
• Is she in the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council?
• The electoral district she represents
• Some details about her personal history and interests

Extended response question:

Explain in your own words the strengths and weaknesses of the political party system in Victoria. What are the benefits of this system? How might it be flawed? Did you learn anything new about the political party system you did not know before? Explain your answer.
Lesson plan for teachers

Political Parties – Present your understanding

For this activity, you can ask students to complete a power point presentation, individually or in groups. Alternately you can ask them to complete the assessment task, individually, the information covered is similar in both scenarios. You may choose to use the assessment task as part of the student’s formal appraisal program.

To use the power point option, continue below. If you are using the assessment task, refer to the worksheet which is part of this learning resource.

1. WARM‑UP: WHY SHOULD I CARE?

One of the challenges of engaging students in the political process is finding issues that they care about. This activity is designed to help students start thinking about which issues might interest them.

For this activity, you might need to do some preparatory discussion with students about what constitutes an issue. An issue is something that has two sides, and that usually elicits a strong response or opinion in people. Often events trigger discussion of issues, but the event itself is probably not the issue. For example, a domestic violence incident might trigger a discussion about the issue of whether or not the government or police are doing enough to tackle domestic violence... or a dog biting someone might be a trigger for the issue of whether dangerous dogs should be put down if they attack. Encourage students to look beyond reports of incidents to uncover the issues underneath. Letters to the editor are always an excellent resource for uncovering current issues. VCE English teachers are also a great resource to consult about the currently issues in the news.

Students are going to look through newspapers to identify three issues that interest them:

1. One event and issue that makes them feel proud to be a Victorian
2. One event and issue that makes them feel ashamed to be a Victorian
3. One event and issue that they would like to find out more about

Students should cut out the article (or write down the heading/author/publication if they are using online newspapers) and annotate it, explaining the reasons for their choice. They should also clearly articulate their own opinion on the issue.

Students can share their responses with the class during class discussion.

Questions for written reflection or discussion:

1. What are your main sources of information for finding out what is happening in your local community, state, country or world?
2. How often do you engage with news about what is happening in Victoria?
3. As an adolescent, what are the barriers that might stop you from being aware of what is happening in Victoria?
4. What would be some of the benefits of engaging more with current news and issues about things that are happening in Victoria? How might this help you? How might this help others?
5. What does any of this have to do with the Parliament of Victoria? (e.g. In Parliament, Members of Parliament make and change laws that affect all Victorians. It is possible for young people to engage with the political process in order to ‘make a difference’).
2. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT? PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESS

If students wanted to become involved in one of the issues that they identified in the warm-up, there are lots of ways they could become involved. Similarly, if they wanted to become involved in the political process, there are also many options available to them.

Students are going to research all the different ways that they could take action on their chosen issue or become involved in the political process. There is a list of potential actions below, but it would be better for students to search for these themselves. This Victorian Electoral Commission video is an excellent resource to start with: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EG_lCin1-Gw

After students have researched and recorded notes about the different ways to take action, they are going to display their findings in the form of a mind-map on poster paper.

The mind-map should start with a central node called ‘POLITICAL PARTICIPATION’. Students then add branches to the map, recording all the ways they could take action on an issue or become involved in politics. The mind-map should include:

- Colour that will help students add meaning
- Illustrations/diagrams/logos or symbols to add meaning to each action
- Links or connections between any of the actions
- Visual grouping of categories or actions that are similar

Sample List of Actions:
- Arrange a peaceful protest
- Organise a flash mob
- Ring talkback radio
- Create a petition
- Sign a petition
- Make a speech
- Make a website
- Write a letter to the editor
- Email your local Member of Parliament
- Ring your local Member of Parliament
- Visit your local Member of Parliament at their electoral office
- Make a radio show
- Make a short film
- Make a newsletter
- Get something printed in your school newsletter
- Speak at an assembly
- Create a Facebook page
- Use an online petition service (e.g. Change.org)
- Write a submission to Parliament
- Organise an art show
- Join a political party
- Go to a political rally

3. EVALUATING WAYS OF PARTICIPATING

Ask students to select six types of action from their mind-map that sound appealing. Using the ‘Evaluating Actions’ template, students should brainstorm as many advantages and disadvantages they can think of for each of their six chosen actions. Some things they might like to consider are:

- External advantages or disadvantages (what are the things around them that might act as barriers or helpers for this type of action?)
- What is the ‘reach’ or ‘impact’ of this action? (How many other people can you influence?)
- Is this indirect or indirect political action (i.e. do politicians know about it or not? Does it enable your voice to be heard by the decision-makers in Victoria? Are there other ways to have influence indirectly?)

- Internal advantages or disadvantages (how might this action challenge or help them personally?)
4. POLITICAL PARTIES: PRESENT YOUR UNDERSTANDING

One of the ways that students can take direct action in the political process is to join a political party. Who knows? - Maybe one day this might even lead to them becoming a Member of Parliament!

It is important for students to understand the purpose and nature of political parties, as well as understand the current political parties in Victoria.

The Parliament of Victoria’s website is a great source of information regarding political parties in Victoria: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/the-parliamentary-system/parties-aamp-factions#Today

Students are going to complete a PowerPoint, summarising their findings to the following research questions. It is important that students put their understandings into their own words, as well as reference any resources they have used. This task could either be completed individually or you could split the class into groups of 7 and allocate one slide per person in each group. Once they have conducted their individual research, they should collaborate and collate to build one PowerPoint per group and complete slide 9 together.

Remind students that we are looking at the Victorian branch of the parties, not their federal equivalents.

SLIDE 1: What is a political party? How would you explain the concept of a political party to someone from outer space? (Don’t copy and paste! - Think!)

SLIDE 2: Do you have to be part of a Political Party to become a Member of Parliament? Explain what this means to someone from outer space.

SLIDE 3: What do we call it when two political parties join together to form government? What do you think would be some of the challenges when this happens? What would be some of the advantages?

SLIDE 4: Using either the Labor Party (historically called the Democratic Labor Party), The Liberal Party or the Nationals as a case study, describe their history in Victoria in summarising dot-points (dating back to 1890s where appropriate).

SLIDE 5: What are the eight Political Parties currently represented in the Victorian Parliament? Include their name, logo and slogan where appropriate. Also colour-code each one to show whether it has representation in the Legislative Assembly (green room) or Legislative Council (red room).

SLIDE 6: Choose one party to look at in more detail. Research and explain: The Leader, their main platform/policies (i.e. what do they believe or stand for?) and some fun facts about the party. Include their logo and analyse its symbolism.

SLIDE 7: For your chosen party on Slide 6, explain the process you would have to go through if you wanted to become a member. Do you think it’s an easy or difficult process? What are the costs for you as a student? What does this get you?

Add this activity into activity 4 at the end after slide 7 as part of power point option

SLIDE 8: Independent members

Sometimes in Parliament members are elected as independents, that is, they are not part of a political party. Think about the advantages of being an independent member as well as any limitations or difficulties. There is one independent member in the current Parliament of Victoria, Suzanna Sheed. Find out as much as you about her including:

- How long she has been in Parliament
- Is she in the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council?
- The electoral district she represents
- Some details about her personal history and interest

SLIDE 9: What do you see as the major strengths and weaknesses of the political party system in Victoria? How might this system be flawed? What are its best parts? What did you learn about the political party system that you didn’t previously know about?
5. POLITICAL PARTIES AND ME: A VALUES MATCH-UP

We are now going to look at each of the main parties’ policies in an effort to see which party reflects our own views and values.

Students can use the ‘Policy Comparison Table’ to compare each party’s policies on the issues listed on the table.

Reflection questions:
- What do you notice when you compare each party? What are the main similarities or differences between the parties? Which ones are the most similar, or the most different?
- Which party’s policies match up with your own views the most?
- Which party’s values match up with your own values the most?
- Would you consider joining any of the parties? Why/why not? If so, which one(s)? What would you need to do to join?

6. PARTICIPATING THROUGH POLITICAL PARTIES: ‘HOW TO’ GUIDE

Students are now going to make a brochure that can be displayed or distributed in your school to encourage young people to get involved in politics by joining a political party.

The key components that must be included in their brochure are:
- An overview of the political party system in Victoria and how the party system works in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council
- A step-by-step ‘how to’ guide with information about how to join a party (students might like to choose the party that aligns with their values, or they can give more general advice that tells young people how to join with any of the parties)
- The approximate cost and benefits (i.e. what do they spend and what do they get for their money?) for joining a political party
- Information about why it is a good idea for young people to be involved in the political process

You might like to pair with a teacher who has a junior Civics and Citizenship class and distribute the brochures to the younger students. The younger students could respond with questions, or provide some written feedback evaluating the effectiveness of the brochure.

7. EXTENSION: PARTY TIME! STARTING YOUR OWN POLITICAL PARTY

Anyone in Australia can start his or her own political party. This task asks students to work individually or in groups to imagine they are starting their own party. The first part of the task asks them to articulate what their political party stands for and believes. The second part of the task asks them to research the steps involved to register their newly established party in Victoria.

First, they should establish:
- Their party’s name, logo and slogan
- Their party’s views and values. What do they believe? What is important to them?
- Their policy platform. What are the issues that they will tackle? How will they tackle these? What are there strategies?
- What sort of people would be suitable members of their party. What are their interests, beliefs, and values? Where would they be likely to live?
- People wanting to register a political party need to be able to show that they have the names and addresses of at least 500 voters who are members of the party. How will you reach people to ask them to sign up? What will be your membership drive strategy?

Students should then research the steps required to register their party through the Victorian Electoral Commission’s website: www.vec.vic.gov.au/CandidatesAndParties/RegisteringAPoliticalParty.html

They might like to put this information into a step-by-step flowchart.

One option for a further extension activity, is to conduct a party launch where students can set up booths to launch their party and encourage members to join. Students from younger classes may be invited to the launch. Younger students circulate around the room, listening to speeches from your students about why they should join each particular party. After they have visited each booth, they can sign up for the party that they think aligns with their own views and values. The party with the most members at the end of the session wins!
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Extended response question:

Explain in your own words the strengths and weaknesses of the political party system in Victoria. What are the benefits of this system? How might it be flawed? Did you learn anything new about the political party system you did not know before? Explain your answer.
Comparing policies of the main parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are their core values or beliefs?</th>
<th>Victorian Labor</th>
<th>Liberals Victoria</th>
<th>The Nationals Victoria</th>
<th>Victorian Greens</th>
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<tr>
<td>What are they going to do about education?</td>
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<td>What are they going to do about jobs/employment?</td>
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<td>What are they going to do about the environment?</td>
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<td>What are they going to do about equal rights?</td>
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<td>What are they going to do that is innovative/creative?</td>
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Evaluating ways to take action and participate

**Task:** Choose six ways to take action or participate in the political process (from your mind-map) and brainstorm all the advantages and disadvantages of this type of action in the table below. The first row has been filled in as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of action</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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</table>
| Make a speech at a school assembly about the issue. | • It raises awareness in the local school population - handy if it’s a local issue in the local community  
• It might encourage other students (or teachers) to take action or to talk to other people in the wider community  
• It can be organised during school time, so is easy to plan  
• It’s good practice for public speaking, which is a useful skill that will look good on my CV for job applications | • It only reaches a relative small proportion of the population and people in the wider community won’t have their awareness raised  
• Politicians aren’t aware that it’s happened so it won’t have a direct impact on what happens in Parliament  
• Sometimes people don’t listen in school assemblies  
• It might be nerve-wracking or intimidating |
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