

CIVICS (POLITICS)

INTRODUCTION

Politics is about how societies are governed, how public policy is developed, and how power is distributed. Civics is a branch of politics that focuses on the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship, the role of governments, and how people can get involved in the political process and take action on issues of civic importance. The study of civics supports students in becoming informed, engaged, and active citizens in the various communities to which they belong, whether at the local, national, or global level.

Strands

The Grade 10 civics (politics) course is organized into the following three strands.

- A. Political Inquiry and Skill Development:** This strand highlights the political inquiry process and the skills that students need in order to become active and informed citizens who participate purposefully in civic affairs and can influence public decision making. Students will develop their ability to use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when analysing issues, events, and developments of civic importance. They will apply this process and related skills in a variety of contexts throughout the course, thereby enhancing their ability to solve problems and to be critically thoughtful and collaborative citizens in the various communities to which they belong.
- B. Civic Awareness:** This strand focuses on the beliefs, values, rights, and responsibilities associated with democratic citizenship and governance. Students will develop their understanding of how people's values and beliefs influence both their civic actions and their positions on local, national, and/or global issues. Students will explore, in the context of various issues, the roles and responsibilities of the different levels and branches of government in Canada and will determine ways in which they themselves can responsibly and effectively participate in political and civic decision making, both in Canada and the world.
- C. Civic Engagement and Action:** In this strand, students will explore ways in which people in different communities express their beliefs and values, voice their positions on issues of civic importance, and contribute to the common good. In addition, students will assess whether the perspectives and contributions of different people are equally valued. Students will also explore the civic contributions of various non-governmental organizations and other groups. In this strand, students will have opportunities to express their own ideas and perspectives and to make informed judgements by planning a course of action relating to a civic issue, event, or development of personal interest.

Citizenship Education

The expectations in the Grade 10 civics (politics) course provide numerous opportunities for students to explore the four elements of the citizenship education framework: identity, attributes, structures, and active participation (see page 10).

The Concepts of Political Thinking

The four concepts of political thinking – political significance, objectives and results, stability and change, and political perspective – underpin thinking and learning in all politics courses in the Canadian and world studies program. At least one concept of political thinking is identified as the focus for each overall expectation in strands B and C of the Grade 10 civics (politics) course. The following chart describes each concept and provides sample questions related to it. These questions highlight opportunities for students to apply a specific concept in their studies. (See page 13 for a fuller discussion of the concepts of disciplinary thinking.)

Political Significance
<p>This concept requires students to determine the importance of things such as government policies; political or social issues, events, or developments; and the civic actions of individuals or groups. Political significance is generally determined by the impact of a government policy or decision on the lives of citizens, or by the influence that civic action, including the civic action of students, has on political or public decision making. Students develop their understanding that the political significance of something may vary for different groups of people.</p> <p>Related Questions*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What do you think is the most important reason for engaging in civic action? (B1.3) – What criteria do you think should be used when deciding which events or people to formally recognize? (C2.2) – Why do some people not vote? What is the significance of their lack of participation for Canadian citizenship? (B1.2)
Objectives and Results
<p>This concept requires students to explore the factors that lead to events, policies, decisions, and/or plans of action of civic and political importance. It also requires students to analyse the effects of civic and political actions and to recognize that government policies and decisions as well as responses to civic issues can have a range of effects on various groups of people. A comparison of the initial purpose or goals of a policy or decision and its effects enables students to distinguish between intended and unintended results.</p> <p>Related Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How would you know if your plan were achieving its objectives? (C3.4) – Why do you think that, in order to earn a secondary school diploma in Ontario, students must complete community involvement hours? (B3.2) – What was the objective of the UN Declaration of Human Rights? Do all people enjoy the rights embodied in that document? (B3.4)

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* The “related questions” are drawn directly from the overview chart that precedes the Grade 10 civics (politics) course and from the sample questions that accompany many specific expectations.

Stability and Change

This concept requires students to analyse how and why political institutions and government policies change over time or why they remain the same. Students will determine how political structures and decisions contribute to stability and change within various local, national, and/or global communities. They analyse ways in which various institutions, groups, or individuals resist or support change, as well as how a variety of factors, including civic action, can contribute to change or stability. Students also apply this concept to help them determine when change is necessary and how they themselves can contribute to change or help ensure stability through civic action.

Related Questions

- If you were concerned about a social issue in publicly funded schools, would it be more appropriate to contact your MP, your MPP, or your city or band councillor? Why? (B2.2)
- What contributions can I make to my community? (Overview)
- What impact can consumers' choices have on the natural environment? (C1.3)

Political Perspective

This concept requires students to analyse the beliefs and values of various groups, including different governments, in local, national, and/or global communities. Students analyse how these beliefs and values, as well as political ideologies, can affect one's position on or response to issues of civic importance. Students also develop their awareness of how stakeholder groups with different perspectives can influence the policies and platforms of political parties and the decisions of governments.

Related Questions

- How might you determine whether your student council represents the perspectives of all students in the school? (A1.5)
- How important a role do you think the media play in swaying public opinion on social/political issues? Whose opinions do you think the media reflect? (B2.4)
- Why might some people's perspectives be valued more than those of others? (C2.1)

The Political Inquiry Process

In each course in politics in the Canadian and world studies curriculum, strand A focuses explicitly on the political inquiry process, guiding students in their investigations of issues, events, developments, policies, and/or plans of action. This process is *not* intended to be applied in a linear manner: students will use the applicable components of the process in the order most appropriate for them and for the task at hand. Although strand A covers all of the components of the inquiry process, it is important to note that students apply skills associated with the inquiry process throughout the content strands in each course. (See page 27 for a fuller discussion of the inquiry process in the Canadian and world studies program.)

The following chart identifies ways in which students may approach each of the components of the political inquiry process.

Formulate Questions
<p>Students formulate questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to explore various issues, events, developments, and/or policies that are related to the overall expectations in order to identify the focus of their inquiry – to help them determine which key concept (or concepts) of political thinking is relevant to their inquiry – that reflect the selected concept(s) of political thinking – to help them focus on the kind of evidence they need to gather – to develop criteria that they will use in evaluating policy, data, evidence, and/or information; in making judgments, decisions, or predictions; in reaching conclusions; in formulating and/or in evaluating plans of action
Gather and Organize
<p>Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – collect relevant qualitative and quantitative data, evidence, and/or information from a variety of primary and secondary sources,^a including visuals^b and community resources^c – determine if their sources are accurate and reliable – identify the purpose and intent of each source – identify the points of view in the sources they have gathered – use a variety of methods to organize the data, evidence, and/or information they have gathered – record the sources of the data, evidence, and/or information they are using – decide whether they have collected enough data, evidence, and/or information for their inquiry

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a. Primary sources may include, but are not limited to, census data, interviews, legislation, letters, photographs, policy documents, speeches, and treaties. Secondary sources may include, but are not limited to, documentaries and other films, editorials, news articles, political cartoons, reference books, song lyrics, and works of art. Depending on the context, digital sources, including social media and websites, can be either primary or secondary sources.

b. Visuals may include, but are not limited to, photographs, media clips, maps, models, graphs, and diagrams.

c. Community resources may include, but are not limited to, a range of resources from community groups and associations, government offices, and non-governmental organizations.

Interpret and Analyse

Students:

- analyse data, evidence, and information, applying the relevant concepts of political thinking (see preceding chart)
- use different types of tools to help them interpret and analyse their data, evidence, and/or information
- identify the key points or ideas in each source
- analyse graphs, charts, and/or diagrams
- construct graphs, charts, and/or diagrams to help them analyse the issue, event, development, and/or policy they are investigating and/or the plan of action they are developing
- analyse their sources to determine the importance of an issue, event, development, plan of action, and/or policy for communities, individuals, and/or groups, including different groups
- identify biases in individual sources
- determine if all points of view are represented in the source materials as a whole, and which, if any, are missing

Evaluate and Draw Conclusions

Students:

- synthesize data, evidence, and/or information, and make informed, critical judgements based on that data, evidence, and/or information
- determine the short- and long-term impact of an issue, event, development, and/or policy on people within various local, national, and/or global communities
- reach conclusions about their inquiry and support them with their data, evidence, and/or information
- make predictions based on their data, evidence, and/or information
- determine the ethical implications of an issue, policy, or action
- use criteria to determine appropriate forms of action, or to evaluate the impact of a plan of action

Communicate

Students:

- use appropriate forms (e.g., oral, visual, written, kinaesthetic) for different audiences and purposes
- communicate their arguments, conclusions, predictions, and/or plans of action clearly and logically
- use terminology and concepts related to politics and citizenship education correctly and effectively
- cite sources, using appropriate forms of documentation