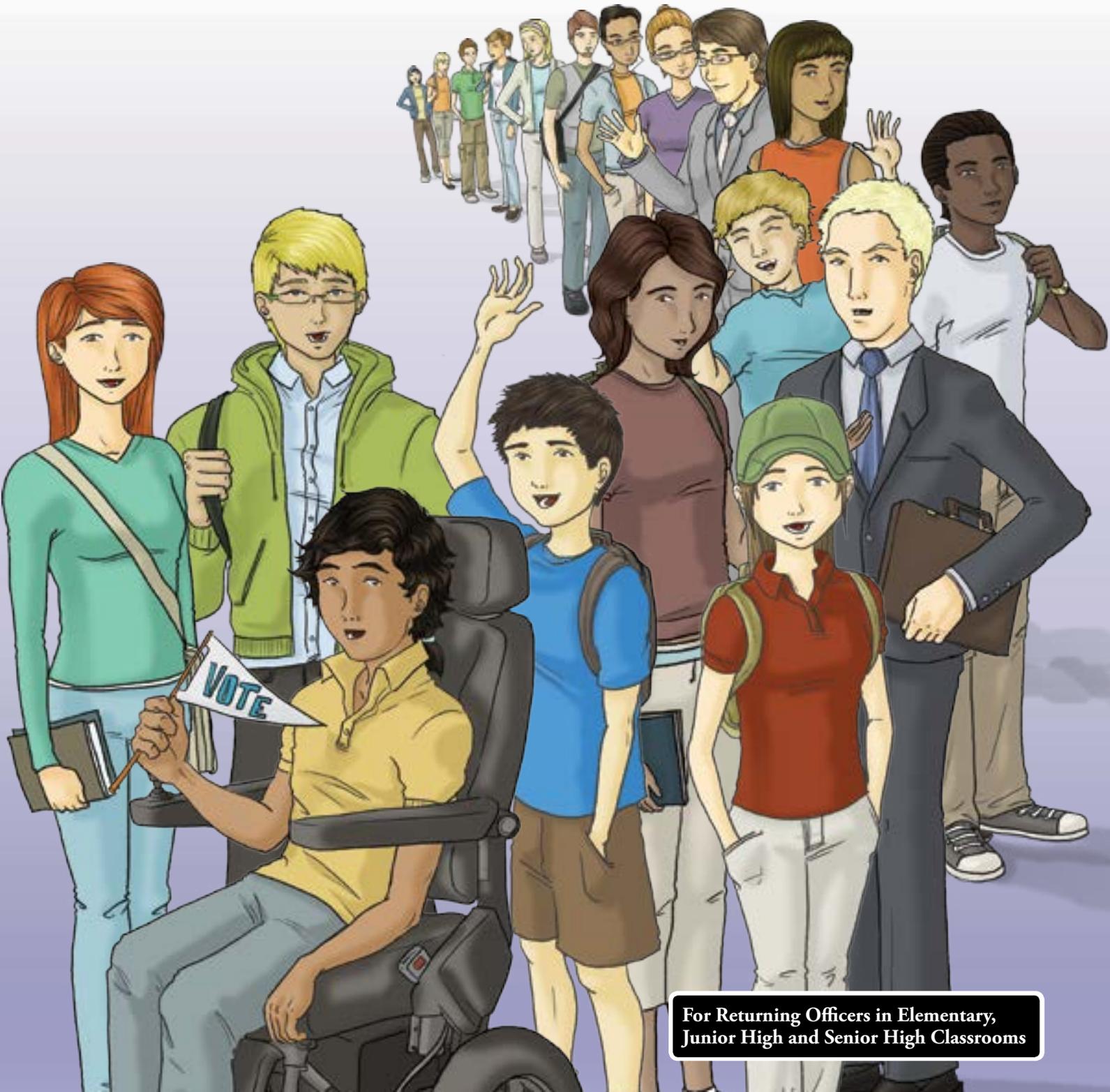


BUILDING FUTURE VOTERS



For Returning Officers in Elementary,
Junior High and Senior High Classrooms

“Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein.”

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

At **Elections Alberta**, we are committed to encouraging youth to explore the democracy in which we live. Youth who are introduced to democracy at an early age are more likely to take on a consistent, active role, as an adult.

Through *Building Future Voters*, we strive to develop an informed understanding of the electoral system and the role each individual has as a citizen so they may take personal responsibility and initiative in influencing the outcome of important decisions that will ultimately affect their lives.

This new edition modernizes the resource in both print and digital form, providing educators and students improved access to its many learning opportunities.

It is with personal hope that *Building Future Voters* will continue to contribute to the development of the next generation of informed and engaged voters.



Glen Resler

Chief Electoral Officer

Acknowledgements

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Lisa Brown, Calgary
Linda Rae Carson, Edmonton
Kerry Faber, Edmonton
Melissa Guzzo Foliaro, Edmonton
Craig Harding, Calgary
Stacy Morgan, Edmonton
Cheryl Ruttle, Calgary
Corvin Uhrbach, Lacombe

Resource and Website Concept, Development and Writing

InPraxis Learning
Patricia Shields-Ramsay
Doug Ramsay
Christopher Shields

Resource Design, Illustrations and Website

Perry Shulak, Critical Fusion Inc.

Editing

Virginia Durksen, Visible Ink Incorporated

Elections Alberta

Glen Resler
Drew Westwater
Ian Tuckey

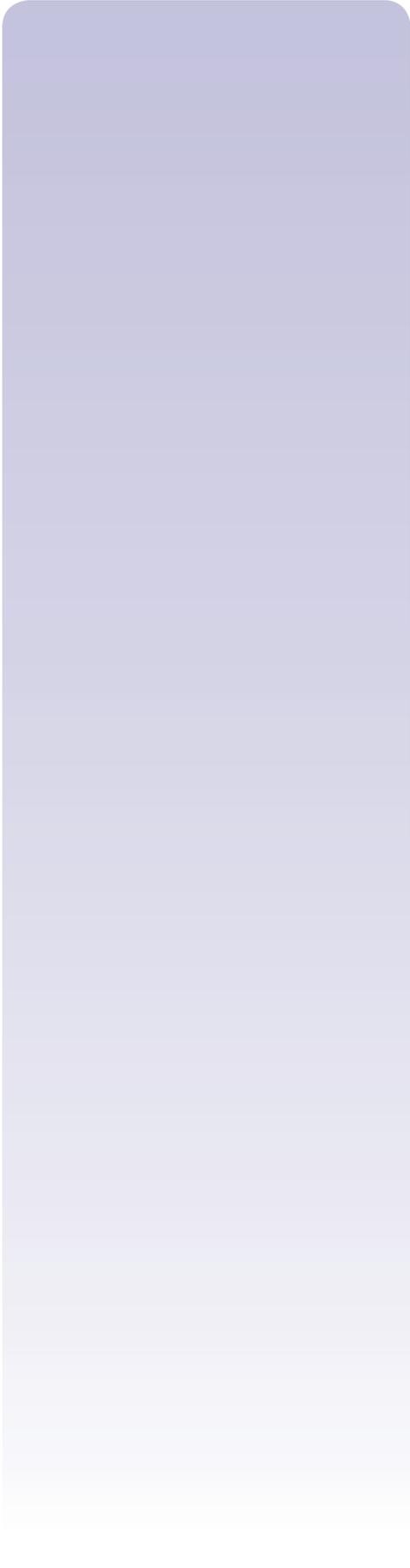
Permission is granted to make copies of any or all parts of this resource for educational, not-for-profit use only.

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Please be aware that internet websites may change or disappear in the time between when this resource was written and when it is read. All websites in this resource were current at the time of publication.

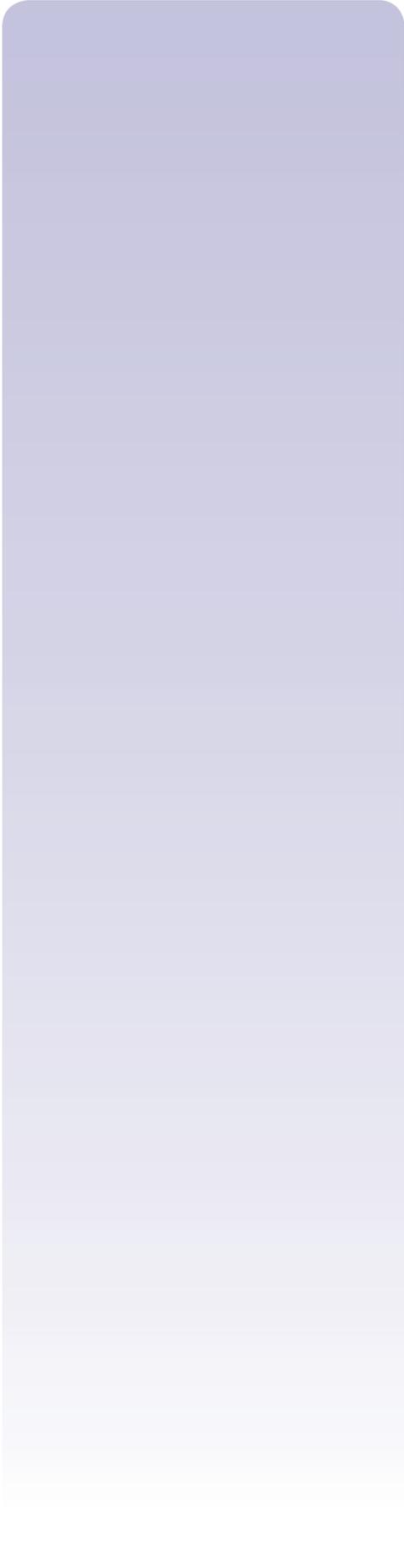
Teachers should check each website for appropriateness before using it in the classroom or providing the website address to students.

The developers have made every effort to acknowledge sources used in this resource. If any questions arise as to use of source materials, we will be pleased to make the necessary corrections in future printings.



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■ Building Future Voters

A Resource for Returning Officers

The vision of Elections Alberta is to inspire and engage participation in the democratic process. This vision can be achieved if citizens are encouraged to build a deeper understanding of democracy and an appreciation for the impact of their actions on their communities. *Building Future Voters* emphasizes engaged and active participation, collaboration and commitment to democratic values – all principles important to meaningful participation in society.

■ About *Building Future Voters*

The *Building Future Voters* resources are about more than voting. They encourage the involvement of students in their communities and society as a necessary first step to involvement in political processes, including voting.

The *Building Future Voters* resources provide opportunities for students to:

- Engage in an exploration of democracy, governance, the electoral process and decision-making in the context of daily life and involvement in society
- Consider ways that they can be active, participatory citizens
- Explore multiple perceptions of citizenship, identities, rights, representation, change and ideology
- Participate in the electoral process and understand the responsibilities of individuals and government
- Apply those understandings to the development and implementation of a project that makes a difference at home, school or in the community

Building Future Voters moves students from an understanding of the electoral process to an emphasis on political participation in the larger picture of commitment to democratic ideals. Students are encouraged to see voting as both a starting point and a natural and important extension of their involvement in their communities and in current issues which affect their lives.

Building Future Voters provides a context through which students explore



The *Building Future Voters* resources are created for **elementary, junior high and senior high** classrooms. They support specific outcomes in the Alberta Social Studies Grade 6, Grade 9 and 30-1/30-2 curriculum. They also support competencies. Alberta Education identifies the competencies at <https://education.alberta.ca/competencies>.

The **Grade 6 Social Studies** Program of Studies focuses on citizenship, identity and democratic processes of decision-making within society. Students focus on ways that they can become involved in their communities.

The **Grade 9 Social Studies** Program of Studies focuses on citizenship, identity and quality of life and how students are impacted by political and legislative processes in Canada. Students explore issues relating to governance and decision-making, including the effect of citizen participation on democracy.

The **Social Studies 30-1 and 30-2** Programs of Studies focus on citizenship, identity and ideologies. Students focus on how choices to participate in democratic processes can lead to involvement in personal, national and global communities and develop beliefs, values and attitudes that enable personal responses and empowerment.

The topics of decision-making, governance and the electoral process can be a natural place for students to explore issues, challenges and decisions that a democratic society faces.

Building Future Voters has been developed for Alberta students and teachers, and is designed to support, enrich and extend the experiences provided by the Social Studies Program of Studies through an exploration of the electoral system and participation through voting.

The teaching resources are based on approaches, strategies and tools that encourage citizen involvement and participation – with students, teachers, individuals involved in the electoral process and community members.

and investigate the electoral process in the context of multiple issues and perspectives, and the importance of the concepts of inclusiveness, impartiality and transparency in a democratic system. Students are encouraged to develop an interest in, and commitment to, the idea of participating in the electoral process. Students connect concepts related to the electoral process to concepts related to individual and collective citizenship.

Building Future Voters consists of the following components:

- This *Building Future Voters* Returning Officer's resource, which provides Returning Officers with information and activities for participating with Alberta classrooms as they learn about the electoral process
- *Building Future Voters* elementary, junior high and senior high teaching and learning resources, which include approaches, activities, assessment strategies, visual organizers and backgrounders for teaching about citizen participation, elections and democracy
- *Build the Vote!*, which provides the process and materials to conduct an election simulation in the classroom
- The *Building Future Voters* website, at www.buildingfuturevoters.ca



The *Building Future Voters* website engages students in an exploration of issues, information, fast facts and questions – all connected to the inquiries in each learning sequence of the teaching and learning resources. Clickable icons on each webpage open pop-ups, which provide a variety of sources, including primary sources, videos, news articles, research and website links.

The teacher webpage of the *Building Future Voters* website provides PDF versions of this resource, *Build the Vote!* and the *Building Future Voters* elementary, junior high and senior high teaching and learning resources. Additional resources and weblinks are also provided on the teacher webpage.

Elections Alberta will provide, upon request, an **Election Simulation Toolkit**,

which includes the following items:

- Electoral Division Map
- Provincial Electoral Division Map
- Voting Screen
- Pencils (3)
- Paper Ballot Box Seals (3)
- Election Officer Badges
- Scrutineer Badges
- “Vote Here” Sign
- Registration Officer Sign
- Poll Book (modified to include 6 pages)
- Statement of Poll (photocopy)
- Blind Voter Template
- Guide for Scrutineers
- Guide for Polling Place Officials
- Guide for Use of the Special Ballot Poll
- Guide for the Conduct of Mobile Polls
- Guide for Candidates on the *Election Act*
- Information for Students on Provincial Elections (brochure)

Additional resources for Returning Officers are included in the **Election Simulation Toolkit**:

- *Election Act*
- Returning Officer Calendar

Throughout the *Building Future Voters* grade level resources, teachers are encouraged to contact Elections Alberta to request your participation. Contact Elections Alberta to indicate your willingness to support teachers and students as they learn about citizenship, democracy and the electoral process. Elections Alberta will then provide you with booking and contact information for the school and teacher.

● The Role of Returning Officers

Throughout *Building Future Voters*, strategies encourage interaction between Returning Officers, who have direct and authentic experience with the electoral process, and Alberta students. The suggestions, strategies and tools in this guide include delivering presentations, facilitating discussions of the electoral process, participating in interviews and supporting a student election or an election-related project.

Elections Alberta

Suite 100, 11510 Kingsway NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5

Office Hours:

Monday through Friday

8:15 a.m. to 12 noon;

1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Email: info@elections.ab.ca

Tel: 780-427-7191

Fax: 780-422-2900

Other locations in the province can call toll free by dialing 310-0000 then dial 780-427-7191

■ How to Use this Resource



Individuals tasked with managing the electoral process in Alberta can play an important role in supporting teachers and students. This resource outlines several meaningful ways for Returning Officers to effectively support the Alberta Social Studies program at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels. As a tool for Returning Officers, this resource is designed to assist you in helping students and teachers gain knowledge of the electoral process in Alberta.

- ➔ **To find out what students are learning when they use the *Building Future Voters* grade level resources, go to pages 7–10. This section will provide you with information about the sequence of learning and an idea of curriculum learning expectations that are met through the *Building Future Voters* resources.**
- ➔ **To find out about the inquiry process that students use in Social Studies, go to page 11. The *Building Future Voters* resources are based on an inquiry process. The inquiry process involves exploring and researching questions about information, decision-making, dilemmas or controversies.**
- ➔ **To explore some general suggestions and strategies for working with students, go to pages 13–14. This section will provide strategies to help you become more comfortable interacting with students.**
- ➔ **To review strategies for participating in an interview with students, go to pages 15–16.**

This resource provides:

- Strategies and approaches to help Returning Officers plan to interact and work effectively with elementary, junior high and senior high students and their teachers
- An overview of what students learn in their Social Studies classes
- Strategies and approaches to help Returning Officers enrich student knowledge and understandings of democratic processes and engage them in issues that may affect their lives

- ➔ To review strategies for planning a class presentation, go to pages 17–18.
- ➔ To review strategies for supporting students in a student election or election-related project, go to pages 21–25.
- ➔ To find out what students learn across different grade levels in Social Studies, go to pages 27–28. This section will help you understand the sequence of concept development and the knowledge and understandings that are emphasized. It can also help you build a context for prior knowledge that students will have at the grades 6, 9, and 12 grade levels.

● Features

Within each section of the resource, features provide support for implementation of the activities.



Timing estimates are provided to help you prepare to work with students.



Prepare provides a list of resources and materials that may be needed to implement the activities you conduct with students.



Technology provides website links and technology-based suggestions that can support the work you do with students.



Find Out More provides references to additional resources and sources of information.

■ What Students Will Learn

Building Future Voters provides activities that support **selected** learning outcomes in the Alberta Social Studies Grades 6, 9 and the 30-1/ 30-2 curriculum. Some support is also provided for the Social Studies 20-1/ 20-2 curriculum. Teachers may be implementing these activities at any point throughout their programs, so your involvement may be requested at different times during the school year.

What will students learn as they use the *Building Future Voters* resources? Learning is organized around inquiry questions that encourage students to explore and investigate information and issues related to the electoral process. These questions provide a different focus for each grade level. This focus is tied to curriculum learning expectations at each of these grade levels.

■ Elementary

At the elementary level, *Building Future Voters* provides an introduction focused on social participation and four sequences of learning activities.

Make It Matter

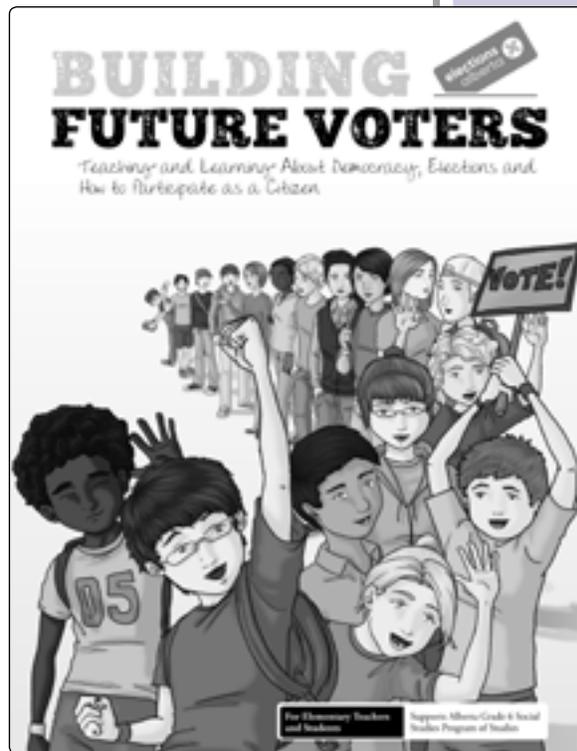
What difference can I make?

Make It Matter introduces an overarching inquiry question that provides the context for the *Building Future Voters* elementary program. Students explore examples of ways that young people can take a stand on issues and questions that are of importance to them. They decide on an individual, group or class action project that will make a difference in their school or community.

Learning Sequence 1

Why does democracy need participation?

The abstract concepts of democracy and representation can be difficult for some Grade 6 students to understand. Learning Sequence 1 encourages students to explore what democracy means. It examines similarities and differences between direct and representative democracy, and asks students to consider how a democracy encourages participation and involvement.



Find Out More



Statistics Canada provides articles on civic engagement and political participation in Canada:

Turcotte, M. (2015). *Political participation and civic engagement of youth*. Statistics Canada.

www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-006-x/2015001/article/14232-eng.htm

Turcotte, M. (2015). *Civic engagement and political participation in Canada*. Statistics Canada.

www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2015006-eng.htm

Learning Sequence 2

Why does provincial government matter?

The provincial level of government has an effect on many aspects of day-to-day life. A review of provincial government deepens students' understandings of the concept of representative democracy as well as the responsibilities of government. Learning Sequence 2 encourages students to build understandings of the concept of responsibility through research into the responsibilities of government ministries and departments.

Learning Sequence 3

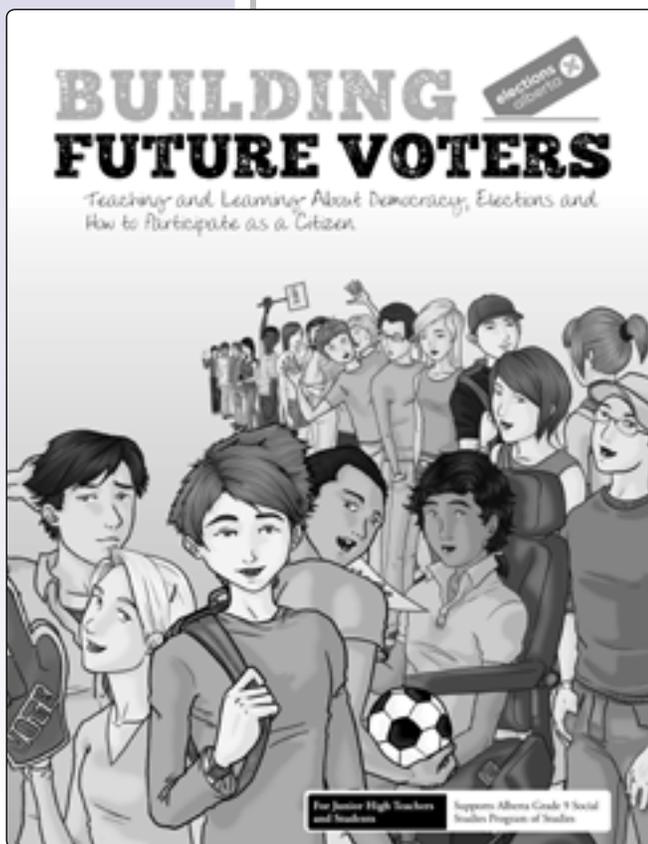
If I could vote, would I?

The electoral process represents a fundamental principle of democracy – citizen participation. The electoral process emphasizes values of equity, fairness, accountability and openness. Learning Sequence 3 invites students to explore and experience the electoral process in Alberta. They experience how to vote, the impact of a vote, how to convey messages and how to participate.

Learning Sequence 4

What matters most after an election?

The processes of democracy do not end with an election. In Learning Sequence 4, students investigate how they can build strategies for participation and involvement in their school and communities. This final learning sequence asks students to return to the overarching inquiry question, **What difference can I make?**



● Junior High

At the **junior high** level, *Building Future Voters* provides an introduction focused on social participation and four sequences of learning activities.

Make It Matter

Does everyone have the same opportunities to participate?

Make It Matter introduces an overarching inquiry question that provides the context for the *Building Future Voters* junior high program. Students explore examples of ways that young people can take a stand on issues and questions that are of importance to them. They decide on an individual, group or class action project that will make a difference in their communities.

Learning Sequence 1

Do we live in a democracy?

In Learning Sequence 1, students explore understandings and conceptions of democracy in Canada, as well as the organization and responsibilities of Canadian governments. Students review what they know and investigate what they believe to be most important in a democracy.

Learning Sequence 2

How do our votes influence government decision-making?

The electoral process can be influenced by voter attitudes, economic conditions and current issues. Learning Sequence 2 presents an example of an issue with political and economic implications and encourages students to explore how participation in the electoral process can affect voter and government decision-making.

Learning Sequence 3

What do you mean, our votes don't count?

Democratic processes, including elections, emphasize values of equity, fairness, accountability and openness. In Learning Sequence 3, students investigate the right to vote in the context of age, citizenship and equitable, accessible processes. Students also consider the historical context of voting rights.

Learning Sequence 4

Why should we be more involved?

The processes of a democratic society result in ongoing questions, concerns and challenges. In Learning Sequence 4, students explore issues related to citizen participation, including voting age and voter turnout. This final learning sequence asks students to return to the overarching inquiry question, **Does everyone have the same opportunities to participate?**

Find a range of information, from a survey of 1 000 Canadians aged 18 to 25, about the recent history of youth engagement in Canadian politics and the consequences of increased voting rates in *The Next Canada: Politics, political engagement, and priorities of Canada's next electoral powerhouse: young Canadians* (2016), commissioned by the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. <http://abacusdata.ca/the-next-canada-politics-political-engagement-and-priorities-of-canadas-next-electoral-powerhouse-young-canadians/>

In *Message Not Delivered: The Myth of Apathetic Youth and the Importance of Contact in Political Participation* (2015), Samara Canada, a national charity dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics, compares political participation and contact rates between citizens and Canadian political leaders across three age groups. Find this report at www.samaracanada.com/research/active-citizenship/message-not-delivered.

● Senior High

At the **senior high** level, *Building Future Voters* provides an introduction focused on social participation and two sequences of learning activities.

Make It Matter

Should political participation be a choice or an obligation?

Make It Matter introduces an overarching inquiry question that provides the context for the *Building Future Voters* senior high program. Students explore examples of ways that young people can take a stand on issues and questions that are of importance to them. They decide on an individual, group or class action project that will make a difference in their communities.

Learning Sequence 1

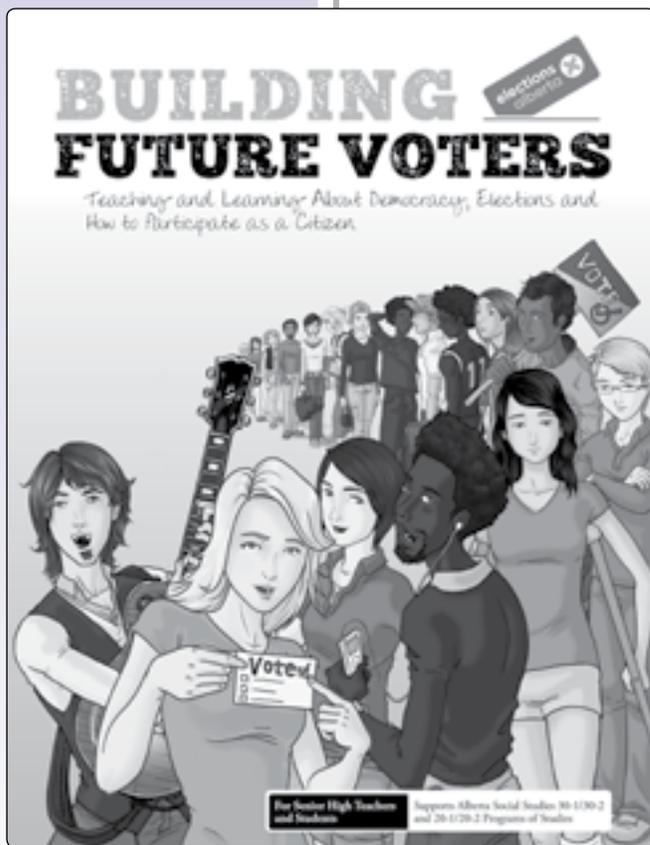
Why is voting both an individual and collective responsibility?

In Learning Sequence 1, students explore perspectives and perceptions of individual and collective identity in popular culture. They consider the influence that identity has on political participation, including voter turnout and political action. Students investigate current issues related to the electoral process, as well as the extent to which identities, beliefs and values affect political change and reform.

Learning Sequence 2

How is the political process influenced by identities and ideologies?

Learning Sequence 2 invites students to consider the relationship between young adults, public policy and formal politics, including the electoral process. Students reflect on how the choice to vote or not to vote can represent affiliations with values and ideologies, and can result in a disconnect between public policies and the responses of individuals to citizenship rights, roles and responsibilities. Students explore various perspectives on political participation, including actions of dissent. This final learning sequence asks students to return to the overarching inquiry question, **Should political participation be a choice or obligation?**

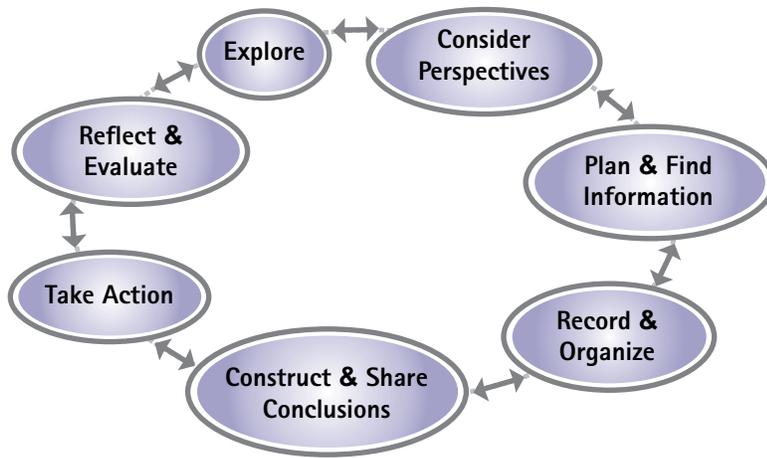


■ What the Inquiry Process Involves

What is inquiry? Inquiry is a decision-making or problem solving process that guides research and investigation of critical issues and questions. Inquiry usually asks students to start with their own knowledge and perspectives, collect information and apply thinking skills to develop conclusions and consider how to take action.

The inquiry model used with students in the *Building Future Voters* resources uses the following steps to develop research, decision-making and problem solving skills. The inquiry model is consistent across all grade levels. However, students are expected to apply increasingly complex research, problem solving, decision-making and communication skills.

The Inquiry Model



When students **Explore**, they are asked to think about what we know and why this inquiry is important, interesting and relevant to themselves and to others.

When students **Consider Perspectives**, they identify research questions and consider who is affected by this issue. They also find out about the different opinions and perspectives that may influence decisions.

As students **Plan and Find Information**, they identify and manage the sources of information that will help them research and understand the issue.

As students **Record and Organize**, they record what they find out, and look for patterns, connections, similarities and differences in the information.

When students **Construct and Share Conclusions**, they discuss and present conclusions and the supporting evidence. They explore the perspectives involved, form opinions and make decisions.

When students **Take Action**, they decide what they will do with what they have learned. They make a plan to act on their decisions.

As students **Reflect and Evaluate**, they consider how effective their decisions and actions were. They think about what we could change, do next, or find out more about.

■ How to Work Effectively With Students



Working with students can be a very worthwhile experience. Let them know that you are interested in them, what they are doing and how they are learning. Plan ways you can interact effectively with students by:

- Being yourself, open, approachable and honest
- Treating students with respect
- Thinking of questions you can ask students and ways you can personalize the information you are providing to them
- Considering the differences between students at the elementary, junior high and senior high levels
- Respecting young people's diversity and exploring ways of reaching out to different groups of students
- Actively listening to what students are saying and taking them seriously
- Focusing on acting as a facilitator of learning, rather than a lecturer
- Demonstrating interest in the specific issues and questions that students bring up
- Using visual aids to help students focus on the information you are sharing with them
- Varying the pace of your presentation and maintaining good eye contact with them
- Encouraging students to share their own insights and experiences
- Moving around the classroom while you are presenting
- Preparing in advance by talking to the classroom teacher about his/her particular group of students and what the teacher expectations are for your involvement



Find Out More

Teaching Democracy: What Schools Need to Do, by Joseph Kahne & Joel Westheimer is available at the weblink www.democraticdialogue.com/DDpdfs/TeachingDemocracyPDK.pdf. This article presents a number of perspectives valuable in thinking about how to approach teaching democratic principles.

Perspectives on voting and citizenship, including historical and youth perspectives, can be found on the Historica Voices website at www.historica.ca/voices/index.do.

Effective Strategies

Ask the teacher what the anticipated outcomes of the presentation are and how much time you have with the class. Develop your presentation and allow sufficient time for interaction and questions. Time your presentation at home and adjust the material accordingly.

Consider ways that you can work best with students in classrooms you will be visiting. Plan more informal discussions, in which students are active participants, rather than lectures.

Review the inquiry process provided in this guide. It is a process that students are taught throughout their social studies program and is applicable to all grade levels. Support the inquiry process by encouraging students to ask questions.

Plan in advance the information you wish to share with students. Many students will be interested in your personal experiences with the electoral process and in stories you may share about your job and responsibilities. Students will be interested in hearing about some of the personal challenges you face in your job. Think of some anecdotes that you are willing to share with students; however, ensure that your anecdotes relate to the topics you are discussing. Check the topics for each grade level provided in the sections that follow for ideas.

Students will appreciate your interest in their stories as well. You may also think of some questions you can ask of students, such as what they know about elections and what some of their opinions about voting are. Respond directly to student questions. Recognize effective questions and provide concrete examples in your responses.

Students will also be interested in the personal aspects of your job. They will want to hear how you react to the issues that you face as a Returning Officer. It is appropriate to reference current legislation in explaining how you must respond to any issues or controversies.

Plan to ask students to share examples of the types of decisions they have to make in their classroom or school. Think about comparisons you can make between the decision-making that representatives are responsible for, and the type of decision-making that goes on in a classroom or school.

Ask students for their opinions and thoughts on different issues and topics. Students appreciate the opportunity to offer and share their own perspectives. Personalize your discussions. Tell them about challenges you have faced in dealing with issues. In informal discussions, draw from student questions and the experiences they share to help illustrate the points you want to make with them.

■ How to Prepare to Work With Students



Teachers may ask you, in your capacity as a Returning Officer, how you can support students' learning as they study, research and discuss the electoral process through the context of citizenship and government. Let teachers know the extent to which you are comfortable and available to participate with students in the classroom.

① Interviews

One of the first requests you may receive is to participate in a **class interview** or provide a **presentation** to students about the provincial electoral process in Alberta. Teachers should provide interview questions to you in advance. You may wish to indicate whether these questions can be emailed or faxed to you. You may also want to pick them up so you can meet the teacher in advance of your presentation.

If you cannot participate directly in a classroom interview, consider responding to four or five interview questions from a class by email or in a telephone or Skype interview.

When you receive a request from Elections Alberta to participate in an interview, advise them if you require any materials. Plan to provide feedback to Elections Alberta regarding successes and challenges you experience with this activity.



Prepare

- This activity takes little advance preparation. Review questions that teachers or students send to you.
- You may wish to include questions to ask the teacher prior to the interview. (*What is the main purpose for the interviews? Are there some key points that you would like me to cover?*)

What to Expect From Students

Grade 6 students may ask questions regarding:

- The meaning of democracy
- The differences between direct and representative democracies
- Establishment of electoral divisions
- How the electoral process is part of the responsibilities of provincial government

Grade 9 students may ask questions regarding:

- Perspectives on rights and responsibilities that are inherent to the electoral process
- Campaign rules and guidelines
- The electoral process

Grade 11 or 12 students may ask questions regarding:

- Your opinions about voter turnout rates
- Changes that might result in increases in voter participation
- Youth participation in political and social issues and policies

Presentations may be organized with these topics in mind.



Timing

- 1 to 2 hours to gather materials and examples
- 1 to 3 hours to prepare responses to questions

Implementation Timing

- Expect 15 to 45 minutes for a personal interview, depending on grade level
- Class times vary, but expect the following for each grade level if you are invited to take part in a classroom interview:
 - 45 minutes for Grade 6
 - 50 minutes for Grade 9
 - 60 minutes for Grade 12

Teachers at all three grade levels are provided with the following suggestions for your involvement.

Ask students to work in small groups to develop questions to interview a Returning Officer.

Interviews can be conducted in the following ways:

- *Through Elections Alberta, invite a Returning Officer to the classroom to be interviewed.*
- *Compile interview questions and have a group of students represent the class and conduct a telephone interview.*
- *Send interview questions by email to the Returning Officer. Alternatively, set up an interview using conferencing technology, such as Skype.*

Have students compile and discuss responses. How are the Returning Officer's perspectives similar to, or different from, what the class has discovered and learned in their inquiry?

Plan to be Interviewed

An interview conducted by students may take place in different contexts:

- An individual student or small group of students may interview you in person, over the telephone or by email. In the *Building Future Voters* grade level resources, teachers are encouraged to be sensitive to the time demands of electoral officers and to have one student or a group of students conduct an interview on behalf of the class. When you are contacted by students, request that they send you their interview questions in advance.
- You may be invited to the classroom to take part in an interview in which the whole class participates.

Participate in the Interview

Begin with introductions and inform students how they may address you. (It is helpful if you can be introduced by a student.) This will help to make them comfortable starting their interview. Ensure that you ask students what questions they have.

Students will be encouraged to prepare their questions in advance. However, they may also have additional questions that arise from your answers. Be flexible, and respond to the best of your knowledge.

If you are in a classroom setting, consider ways that students may be organized to interview you.

- Have students write their questions on paper strips or chart paper, or ask the teacher to record the questions on chart paper or the board. Pull questions from the list. Try to tell students in advance how many questions you think you will have time for.
- Ask the teacher to organize students into small groups. Depending on time, have each group take turns presenting a question to you.
- Check questions as you talk with students and try to organize any discussion notes you have prepared in advance around these questions.

Bring visuals or examples of election materials that may be available to you. Consider using materials from the **Election Simulation Toolkit**, available from Elections Alberta and described on **page 3**, that may be useful in helping you participate in the interview.

② Class Presentations

Another type of request you may receive is to provide a presentation to students about the provincial electoral process in Alberta. Teachers should indicate what they would like you to discuss and share with students. Make sure that you ask the teacher about expectations when you are contacted.

Teachers can also be asked to send you, in advance, a brief summary of what they are covering with students. You may wish to indicate whether this information can be emailed or faxed to you. Ask teachers where students are in the Learning Sequences of the grade level resource they are using. The learning sequences are described on **pages 7–10** of this guide. If the time limit is insufficient for what you are expected to cover or the number of questions students have exceed the time limit, ask the teacher if you could conduct the presentation over two classes.

Consider any materials from the **Election Simulation Toolkit**, available from Elections Alberta and described on **page 3**, that you may find useful in helping you plan and deliver your presentation.



Prepare

- This activity can involve a few hours of advance preparation. Some of your presentation can be planned. However, be sure to also include time for a question and answer session with students. Inform teachers you would like to do this so that they can have students prepare questions for you.
- You may wish to include questions to ask the teacher prior to the interview. (*What is the main purpose for the class presentation? How long would you like me in your classroom? Are there some key points that you would like me to cover? What do you think I can contribute to your class that will add to and benefit what students are learning? What should I know about your students that will help me interact with them effectively?*)
- Use the **Presentation Template (p. 19)** to help you organize your presentation.
- Review the summaries of the competencies provided on **pages 27–28**. Ask the teacher where students are in the learning sequences.

Plan the Presentation

Students may have prepared questions, so ask teachers to share these with you before you come to the class. Share your own perspectives with students when you make a presentation, keeping in mind that you must uphold the impartiality of your role as a Returning Officer.

Review the appropriate grade level summary of the learning sequences in the *Building Future Voters* resources on **pages 7–10** of this guide. Consider ways you can address the concepts that students are learning in the grade level that you will be working with. Also, consider including the following ideas into your presentation:

- Your ideas about why it is important to be part of the democratic process by participating in the electoral process

Consider the following additional suggestions for your involvement with students.

- *Provide a class presentation to students that introduces them to the electoral process.*
- *Consider ways that you can share strategies for “encouraging the vote” with students.*
- *Participate by viewing and sharing students’ work. Talk with students about voter participation.*



Preparation Timing

- 1 to 3 hours to plan your presentation



Implementation Timing

- Class times vary, but expect the following for each grade level if you are invited to present to students:
45 minutes for Grade 6
50 minutes for Grade 9
60 minutes for Grade 12

- The importance of impartiality and secrecy
- The different roles and responsibilities of those that are part of the election process, such as election officers, candidates, political parties, campaign workers and voters
- What you do after an election is over and where all the ballots go
- What “being a citizen” means to you
- The strategies you use to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to vote
- The responsibilities you have and some of the challenges you face
- The importance of principles such as accountability, transparency, equality, equity and fairness (these are concepts that are applicable to all three grade levels)
- Insights and experiences with local issues and how they can affect the provincial electoral process
- Stories about interesting meetings or challenging decisions
- The importance of hard work, commitment and dedication to your job
- The importance of a professional code of conduct for election officers
- How students would measure fairness, transparency and non-partisan conduct of election officers
- Elections that may be happening in other provinces or countries and the challenges being faced in developing democracies
- Why it is important for all people to vote, especially youth
- What would happen if no one voted.

Consider the following strategies to integrate question periods into a planned presentation:

- Start with a brainstorming session where students work individually or with a partner to record two or three key questions they have. Collect the questions and select one or two to which you can respond.
- Ask students to orally share their inquiry or research questions with you. This can be done in advance of the presentation, with the teacher’s cooperation, or as a general discussion at the beginning of the class.
- Set up a “parking lot” poster at the back of the classroom. Invite students to record any questions they have while you are presenting to them. “Visit” the parking lot near the end of the presentation and discuss the questions that have been recorded. If you have not been able to answer all the parking lot questions by the end of your allotted time advise the students you will get the remaining answers to their teacher. Don’t forget!
- Share anecdotes that reflect your own personal history, how and why you became involved in serving as a Returning Officer. These types of stories are generally well received by students, but it is important to ensure you address students’ perspectives and not spend too much time on your personal background or experiences.
- Introduce issues relating to accessibility to all voters, including historical perspectives that address when groups obtained the right to vote as well as the introduction of voting procedures for vision-impaired voters.

■ Presentation Template

Grade level and content focus:

How to start:

Questions I can ask students:

Information that focuses on the content for this grade level:

Visuals I can use:

Activities I can ask students to do:

What I can leave with students:

What the classroom teacher needs to know:



Prepare

Plan to collect examples of student responses, ideas or work that result from your participation with them.

Tweet your ideas, activities you used with students and insights to share with others on **@ElectionsAB**. Use **#BFVAB** to contribute to the conversation!

■ Name Card Template



Voterlink: www.voterlink.com



Voterlink: www.voterlink.com



Voterlink: www.voterlink.com

3 Student Elections

As part of their learning experiences with the *Building Future Voters* resources, students are encouraged to plan and hold a student election. You may be asked to provide support to students and to advise on the roles and responsibilities of the Returning Officer and other election officers.

How can you support students' learning as they participate in the electoral process? Your support may be as much or little as your time allows. Each of the grade levels are provided with the option of organizing and running a student election and all grade levels are asked to identify an issue that will become the focus of the election campaign.



Prepare

- This activity involves little advance preparation. You may wish to gather information and examples that focus on the sequence of election events. The activity may, however, expect you to participate in a number of different class periods with students.
- Establish the time you can commit in advance with the teacher. If you are only able to commit to one class period, discuss in advance with teachers when and how it would be most effectively used.
- Use the **Presentation Template (p. 19)** to help you organize a presentation on the electoral process.
- Check the *Building Future Voters* grade level focus provided on **pages 7–10**.
- Use the **Participation Template (p. 25)** to help you plan strategies for supporting students.

Plan How to Participate

The following activities may be discussed with the classroom teacher as options for your involvement:

- Spend one class period helping students strengthen their understandings of the electoral process. Use the suggestions provided for planning and delivering a class presentation and focus on the sequence of events during an election. Note that teachers and students use the materials in the resource to organize the election. You are not expected to organize it for them, but rather, act as an expert source of information.
- Suggest to teachers that you can visit the classroom to act as an observer as students implement the electoral process. Discuss with the teacher, and with students on your first visit, how established democracies, including Canada, are often invited to send observers to countries implementing democratic elections. Establish the number of class periods to which you can commit, but try to ensure that you can attend during the polling day that is established.
- Some teachers may decide to work together and hold a multi-classroom or whole school student council election. Establish the extent to which you can participate in advance with teachers.

What to Expect From Different Grade Levels

Elementary and **junior high** students focus on:

- Voter registration
- Voter eligibility and the election process
- Consistency in the election process.

Senior high students focus on:

- Voter eligibility and the election process
- The effects of declining participation in political processes
- Electoral reforms that may improve voter turnout rates.



Preparation Timing

- Will vary, according to the extent of your involvement



Implementation Timing

- Class times vary, but expect the following for each grade level:
 - 45 minutes for Grade 6
 - 50 minutes for Grade 9
 - 60 minutes for Grade 12

Teachers at all three grade levels are provided with the following suggestions for your involvement.

Through Elections Alberta, invite a Returning Officer to help students plan and hold the student election. Returning Officers can be invited to participate in a number of ways:

- *Ask the Returning Officer to email or fax a Writ of Election on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer to establish the beginning of the simulation. Discuss dates and timelines for the election simulation with the Returning Officer when you contact him or her.*
- *Invite the Returning Officer to the classroom to provide an information session on electoral processes for the class or for students who are acting as election officers.*
- *Invite the Returning Officer to participate with students on polling day. The Returning Officer can be asked to act as an observer. Discuss with students how established democracies, including Canada, often send observers to developing democracies.*

- Ask teachers to share the focus of the election. Are students focusing on an issue as part of their election campaigns? Is there a follow up that you can also participate in?
- Help students and teachers prepare some of their own election materials. Create a Writ of Election that you can send to the classroom “on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer.” Determine, along with the teacher and students, if there is a need to assist in developing a “code of conduct” for candidates and election officers. Refer to the *Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Public Service of Alberta* if you need some help getting started.
- Prepare a list of questions that you could ask students about the electoral process. You may plan to ask students once the election is completed, or leave the questions with students to discuss. Questions may include:
 - o What is something new that you learned about elections and the electoral process from this experience?
 - o What was the most interesting part of the election campaign for you?
 - o If you could change something about the electoral process we use, what would you change?
 - o What questions arose during this experience that you were not able to answer?
- Consider inviting the class to email or write you with a summary of their discussions or learning.
- Send a thank-you card or email to the class after your final visit.

How the Student Election is Organized

As students participate in the election simulation, they take on the roles of voters as well as individuals who are involved in administering the election process. There are four roles that students may take on as part of an election team:

- Supervisory Deputy Returning Officer
- Deputy Returning Officer
- Poll Clerk
- Registration Officer

Students also take on roles of candidates, candidate’s official agents, scrutineers, lobby groups and the media. They are provided with role cards and encouraged to research and develop the responsibilities they will have during the election.

Build the Vote! An Election Simulation is provided on the teacher page of the *Building Future Voters* website at www.buildingfuturevoters.ca. The information, forms and templates in the resource are designed to actively engage students with the electoral process, give them opportunities to stand as candidates, explore political party affiliations, run campaigns and vote.

- Information is presented in source card formats, designed to be photocopied and cut into two or four cards per page.
- Source cards provide roles involved in the electoral process, including election officers, candidates and media.
- Templates guide students through steps in the process that are modeled on Alberta election processes.

- The activities, templates and source cards can be applied in different contexts:
 - o To conduct the election simulation in a classroom
 - o To conduct the election with combined classrooms at the same grade level
 - o To organize and conduct an election for a school.

The following cards provide an overview of the process that students are encouraged to follow.

Election Simulation Process Cards

<p>1 Prepare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the context of the election. Will you hold it in your classroom, with other classrooms or with the whole school? <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a planning calendar with dates for the nomination of candidates, the campaign period and polling day. Use the Election Process Cards to identify tasks and the process for the election. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to the teachers of the classrooms involved. Present information to administrators, letting them know what you are doing. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact Elections Alberta to request the participation of a Returning Officer in your election; or, have a teacher act as the Returning Officer. <input type="checkbox"/> Publicize your election in your community or with local media. <p>Source Cards and Templates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election Process Cards Calendar Template 	<p>2 Nominate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the roles involved in the election – candidates, election teams and lobby groups. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify the roles involved in the election – Returning Officer, Supervisory Deputy Returning Officer, Registration Officer, Deputy Returning Officer and Poll Clerks. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with students to prepare criteria for candidate nominations. <input type="checkbox"/> Distribute nomination forms and assign roles. Alternatively, ask students to register their interest in roles as candidates, campaign teams, lobby groups or as election officers. <input type="checkbox"/> Accept nominations of candidates. <p>Source Cards and Templates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role Cards Candidate Nomination Paper
<p>3 Register Voters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Have Registration Officers register participants by creating a list. This will become the List of Electors. Set a registration deadline and ensure that it is publicized. <input type="checkbox"/> Assign each voter a registration number. Record this on the List of Electors. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish an advance poll for students who know they will be away on polling day. <p>Source Cards and Templates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of Electors 	<p>4 Select Candidates and Election Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assign and approve final roles. Fill in the tasks on the role cards. Ensure that all students have a role. <input type="checkbox"/> After nominations have been approved, have the Returning Officer prepare a list of candidates. <input type="checkbox"/> Have candidates appoint their agents and scrutineers. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide time for students with the same roles to meet and assign specific tasks. <p>Source Cards and Templates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate List List of Election Officers

5 Run Campaigns

- Have political party groups and candidates start their campaign to obtain support from voters.
- Design campaign materials, such as posters, leaflets, advertisements and social media messages.
- Have reporters interview candidates and election officers.
- Have lobby groups design materials to bring issues to the attention of candidates and voters.

Source Cards and Templates

Campaign Task Cards

6 Prepare Polling Stations

- While the campaign is being conducted, have election officers prepare for polling day. They should publicize the polling place locations and the date of the election.
- The election officers should also arrange for those students who know they will be away on polling day to advance vote.
- Have the election officers design their own print, audio, video or social media advertisements to encourage voters to vote.
- Prepare the ballots for polling day, listing the names of the candidates in alphabetical order.

Source Cards and Templates

Ballot Template

7 Vote

- Set up polling stations, depending on the level of participation:
 - o Classroom election – Establish 1 or 2 polling stations.
 - o Multi-classroom election – Establish 1 or 2 polling stations per classroom.
 - o School-wide election – Each classroom can be a polling place with one or more polling stations.
- Ensure that polling stations have ballot boxes and voting booths that allow voting to take place in private.
- Have election officers ensure that political parties and candidates do not campaign inside the polling station.
- Have scrutineers watch the process of the election.

Source Cards and Templates

Poll Book

8 Announce Results

- Have the election officers count the total ballots cast. Then, sort the ballots into piles for each candidate, reserving one pile for rejected ballots. Each candidate, their agent and scrutineers can also observe the count of ballots.
- Check the results against the total number of votes cast. Record results on the Statement of Poll.
- Report the results to the Returning Officer, who will do an official count.
- Announce the results.

Source Cards and Templates

Statement of Poll

■ Participation Template

Participate in a Student Election

Grade level _____

Activities Planned to Support Students	Time Planned

Criteria for Observation of a Student Election

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Communication and Follow Up with Students

- Email
- Report
- Letter
- Follow Up Classroom Visit
- Lessons Learned



Prepare

Plan to collect examples of student responses, ideas or work that result from your participation with them in the election simulation.

Tweet your ideas, activities you used with students and insights to share with others on **@ElectionsAB**. Use **#BFVAB** to contribute to the conversation!

■ What Students Learn in Social Studies



The Social Studies Program of Studies focuses on citizenship, identity and democratic processes of decision-making within our society. Students explore ways that they can become involved in their communities and develop beliefs, values and attitudes that enable them to participate and feel empowered to have an impact and effect change.

The Alberta Social Studies program has, as one of its central tenets, the development of the concept of citizenship through awareness of the political process and a commitment to become actively involved as citizens.

The Alberta Social Studies program is organized around two core concepts – citizenship and identity. Knowledge and understandings, values and attitudes are developed through a focus on multiple perspectives (including indigenous and Francophone), pluralism and deliberative inquiry.

With the approval of the **Ministerial Order on Student Learning (#001/2013)**, there is an increased emphasis on competencies as an overall focus for learning. Competencies connect across all subject areas. Competencies are combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students develop and apply for successful learning, living and working. They emphasize aspects of learning that apply within and across all subject areas.

Building Future Voters provides a range of rich opportunities to develop competencies. These competencies provide a focus for the learning activities in this resource and encourage the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge for deep and lifelong learning.

The interrelated concepts of citizenship and identity are at the core of the Social Studies program.

The sense of being a citizen, enjoying individual and collective rights and equitable status in contemporary society, impacts an individual's sense of identity. Individuals need to feel that their identities are viewed as legitimate before they can contribute to the public good and feel a sense of belonging and empowerment as citizens.

Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies (2005):
Edmonton: Alberta Education (p. 4).

The “big ideas” of the Social Studies program centre on democracy, participation and citizenship.



Technology

The Social Studies Program of Studies can be accessed online on Alberta Education's website at <https://education.alberta.ca/programs-of-study/>.

Alberta Education identifies and provides support for the competencies at <https://education.alberta.ca/competencies>.

The following statements summarize how the *Building Future Voters* resources can support the competencies.

Students **think critically** when they conceptualize what democracy means to them, question and analyze evidence, assertions and assumptions about democracy and citizenship and reflect on their own thinking.

Students **solve problems** when they approach challenges relating to citizenship and governance with creativity and flexibility, clarify problems, draw from multiple perspectives, explore problems and generate ideas for taking action.

Students **manage information** as they use a variety of digital and print sources, organize and make connections and interpret and analyze the reliability, validity and integrity of current, historical and geographic information.

Students **innovate and apply creative thinking** when they generate new ideas, apply understandings about democracy, government and the role of the electoral process, transform ideas into actions and contribute to their communities.

Students **communicate** when they share ideas through oral, written and non-verbal media, consider perspectives and demonstrate curiosity and respect for the processes of government and the electoral process.

Students **collaborate** when they work with others, exchange ideas and share responsibilities to explore diverse opinions, approaches and goals in democratic contexts.

Students build **cultural and global citizenship** skills as they analyze political and social contexts, evaluate the impact of decision-making, build appreciation for equity and diversity and believe in their capacity to make a difference.

Students build strategies for **personal growth** as they explore ways to contribute to their communities and develop a commitment to democratic ideals and processes.



Suite 100. 11510 Kingsway NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5G 2Y5
Phone: 780.427.7191 Toll-Free: 310.0000.780.427.7191
Website: www.buildingfuturevoters.ca

