



# POST-TOUR LESSON 2 BEING AN ENGAGED CITIZEN

GRADES 4-8



## **Key Questions**

- What does it mean to be an engaged citizen?
- How can one be an engaged citizen?
- Why is it important to be an engaged citizen?

## **Students will...**

- Understand what being an engaged citizen means.
- Explain how to be an engaged citizen and practice one way to be engaged.
- Understand why it is important to be an engaged citizen within a democracy.

## **Teacher Primer**

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The health of a democracy relies heavily on the engagement of citizens. Elected leaders are most effective in their work if two things are true: the elected leader knows what their constituents want, and the elected leader believes they will be voted out if they do not represent their constituents' concerns in the Assembly.

Being engaged can mean many different things, but in general it means to be aware of one's government's actions and to form and share opinions with other citizens or with the government itself. There are many ways to be engaged, and it is important for every citizen to be involved in the democratic system. Engaged citizenry will result in a government that adequately reflects its citizens' views and can provide the people with what they need/want.

## **Set**

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Ask students to recall past classroom conversations from any past lesson (not necessarily only those from this group of lessons):

- What made those discussions go well?
- What made those discussions struggle?

The point of the above questions is to explain that good things happen when people contribute their thoughts and ideas. Everybody benefits when people share their feelings about a topic, and doing so helps us all learn about one another. You can also explain to students how their thoughts and opinions help your practice as a teacher and that their input is necessary. Think of times you asked their opinions about classroom activities, rubrics for assignments, or things related to school administration, etc.

## **Development**

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Explain to students that effective government operates much in the same way. In a healthy democracy, government acts in a way that is responsive to the people it serves. If citizens do not share their opinions with their government, the government can't function properly. If we want our government to provide us with services we want/need, it needs to know what's important to us.

Explain to students that interacting with their government in this way, namely letting the government know what they want and need, is just one way to be an engaged citizen.

# Development

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Explain that engaged citizens are aware of what their government is doing and contribute their thoughts and ideas to their government. Write "engaged citizen" on the board and ask for input about what things an engaged citizen might do.

Write and discuss students' inputs into this, and ensure to work the following points into the conversation:

Engaged citizens:

- Stay up to date on politics (become informed):
  - read news sites (reliable sources that do fact checks and seek out multiple points of view);
  - read books about politics or democracy;
  - learn about different political parties' platforms;
  - watch debates/parliamentary proceedings (in person or online);
  - follow politicians on social media;
  - talk to and listen to others about their opinions;
  - encourage other citizens to become engaged;
- Give their opinions to their MLA and/or government:
  - write to their MLA;
  - sign petitions;
  - go to public hearings; or
  - vote if they're old enough (18).

Now comes the time to collaborate on deciding on a final project for this group of lessons. Having done all four, and hopefully taking in a tour if possible, students should now feel ready to do a summative assessment about what was encompassed in these lessons.

# **Closure and Assessment**

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It is your decision how to assess your students on this content, but below will be some ideas. Whatever assessment you come up with, it is advisable to ensure that students answer two fundamental questions: **How does our system of government and democracy work in Saskatchewan?** and **Why is it important to become an engaged citizen in our democracy?**

Some assessment ideas for these two fundamental questions could be:

- Make a poster of any size for display in the classroom/school;
- Make a pamphlet/brochure inviting others to become engaged citizens;
- Make a comic strip that answers the above two fundamental questions all in one;
- Organize class debates focused on those two fundamental questions;
- Make “how-to” books to answer the above two fundamental questions;
- Make a PowerPoint presentation (these don't need to be presented, but rather shared with the teacher for assessment);
- Film skits that answer the above two fundamental questions; or
- Anything else you can think of!

When it is decided what assessment you will do, it would be a valuable exercise to involve students in the creation of the expectations you will be looking for. This is both good pedagogical practice as well as an opportunity for you to further solidify the learning around the importance of discussion and being engaged. Students that engage in conversation about the expectations of the projects are more likely to have their wants and needs reflected in the assessment criteria.