

## Preparing to vote

### ACTIVITY



30 minutes  
approximately

# Mum's the word!

During this activity, voters in training will share their views on what democracy is for them. They will also be initiated to representative democracy, which is a cornerstone of our political system.

## OBJECTIVE

*Learn about the various values associated to democracy*

### [LINK TO THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM](#)

Social Sciences Area

*Competency: To understand the organization  
of a society in its territory*

### MATERIAL REQUIRED

- ✓ Large sheets of paper
- ✓ Different coloured markers
- ✓ Stopwatch or device to measure time

## ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

Open up discussions with young people about what it means to them to live in a democracy. Ask them to verbally express the words that come to mind!

## A BIT OF THEORY

Democracy is a political system in which sovereignty resides with the people, meaning that the power belongs to the entire population. Freedom of expression, equality, respect, mutual assistance, and involvement are principles of democracy.

The concept of democracy is over two thousand years old! The term comes from the Greek word *dēmokratia*, from *dēmos*, “the people,” and from *kratos*, “power.”

The famous words “government of the people, by the people, for the people” pronounced by Abraham Lincoln (16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, from 1860 to 1865) are often cited when we discuss the topic of democracy.

The way democracy works has significantly changed since the time when Greek citizens would come together to vote, by show of hands, the various laws related to the smooth functioning of their city.

### Direct or representative?

Democracy is direct or participatory when the people are directly involved in voting laws and their leaders.

Democracy is representative when the population exercises its sovereignty through elected representatives. That is the case of our democracy.

In our democracy, the citizens vote to elect representatives, which are called *members of the National Assembly* at the provincial level, to exercise power in their name. These representatives' mandate will be to voice the population's concerns and to express its point of view on different political questions. During provincial general elections, 125 members are elected to sit in the National Assembly to represent the citizens.

## SUGGESTED STEPS

1. Form teams of four to five young people.
2. Place the large sheets of paper on the floor or hang some up on the class walls. You will need one large sheet per team.
3. Ask the members of each team to form a circle around their sheet of paper.
4. Explain the game rules to each team:
  - First, the activity is done in silence. Young people must use the sheet of paper and coloured markers to express themselves.
  - The goal is for young people to write down ideas that come to mind when talking about democracy. Encourage them to answer questions like:
    - What is democracy? What are the values of democracy?
    - What are the characteristics of our democracy?
    - What are the benefits of living in a democratic society?
  - Taking turns, in silence, each team member has 15 seconds to write, draw, scribble or sketch an idea. Then, it is the next person's turn. That person will also have 15 seconds to illustrate an idea, so on and so forth.
  - All in all, the teams have five minutes to scribble down ideas on their large sheet. Each team member will have more than one chance to jot down an idea on the page.
  - The team members can react or add to what the others have written or drawn. They are free to be creative, but always in silence!
5. Once the five minutes are up, invite the young people to discuss what they have written and drawn with the members of their team. Each team must then name a spokesperson who will give a summary of the democracy-related elements illustrated on their sheet.
6. Go over the activity with the group. First, ask them if it was difficult for them to express themselves only on paper and without speaking. Invite each spokesperson to present the contents of their sheet, one at a time.
7. Go over the theory on democracy by presenting the information found in "A bit of theory."

## SUGGESTION

### Why not display the sheets for other students to see?

Put them up in the classroom or in strategic places in the school. It's an original way to spread your groups' point of view on democracy throughout the school.