

HOW TO BE AN EVERYDAY POLITICAL CITIZEN VIDEO: EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

This guide has three components:

1. General discussion questions
2. A political participation checklist
3. Classroom activities

GOAL: The video, discussion questions, and activities are intended to introduce participants to various ways to get involved in a political issue. Through a conversation between Michelle, a young woman struggling to get by, and her friend Luke, a real-life [Everyday Political Citizen](#) and an experienced advocate for greater accessibility, viewers learn about a wide range of activities that can help to address the political issues they care about.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce participants to various forms of political engagement.
2. Encourage participants to consider how they can use their skills to support democratic engagement.
3. Encourage participants to connect issues of personal concern to political engagement.

AUDIENCE: The video is appropriate for Grade 5 or higher, and English language learners. English and French subtitles are available.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

These questions can be raised before and/or after viewing the video:

1. If you were Prime Minister for the day and could change one thing in your community or country, what would it be?

2. Have you or someone you know been involved in an effort to address a political issue or change government policy? What was your/their experience? (NOTE: If no one has any experience, explore why not, including potential barriers to engagement.)
3. Would you rather work on local issues (i.e. public transit, public parks) or national issues (i.e. environment, immigration)?
4. If you wanted to change something in your community, who would you turn to for support and why?
5. How do these actions compare to voting?

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST:

Use the participation checklist at the end of this guide for activities during or after viewing:

During Viewing:

1. Review the checklist prior to viewing and then ask participants to check-off activities mentioned by either Michelle or Luke. (NOTE: Not all 20 activities are mentioned.)

After Viewing:

1. Ask participants to check-off all the activities they would consider doing.
2. Have participants choose and discuss the four activities that they believe would make the biggest difference for an issue they care about.
3. Have participants identify and discuss the four most difficult activities and the four easiest activities.

ACTIVITIES:

Here are three program-based activities that deepen participants' understanding of democratic engagement and the approaches available to them.

1. Play Dough's Republic
2. Where Is Your Voice Loudest
3. Rank the Power Game

PLAY DOUGH'S REPUBLIC

GOAL: Play Dough's Republic increases participants' interest in Canadian politics and democracy by providing an opportunity to engage in a meaningful conversation about issues that matter to participants and connecting their passions and concerns to Canada's democracy.

OBJECTIVES: Participants will learn:

1. What public policy issues they care about most,
2. How other community members feel about these issues,
3. What aspects of democracy they value most,
4. How to discuss issues of concern to them in a non-partisan and supportive environment, and
5. That their experiences and ideas are valued by others.

AUDIENCE:

Age --	Over 8
Language --	Shared conversational language
Prior political knowledge/experience --	None required
Group Size --	8 or more

TIMEFRAME: To complete the entire activity in one session will take:

Average --	1.5 hours
Minimum --	50 minutes
Maximum --	2.5 hours

It is also possible to break up this activity into a smaller components and deliver over several sessions.

PREPARATION:

Handouts: Print enough for each participant to have one.

- "Issues: What Matter to You?"
- "Play Dough's Republic"
- Evaluation survey (if applicable)

Materials:

- ❑ Colour markers (enough for each group to have several)
- ❑ Poster paper
- ❑ Masking tape
- ❑ Play Dough (enough for each group to have four colours)

Set-up:

- ❑ Arrange room to allow small groups of 3-5 participants space to work at a table.
- ❑ Print enough handouts for each participant.
- ❑ Ensure every participant has a pen or pencil.
- ❑ Prepare one set of Play Dough with 4 colours for every 3-5 participants.
- ❑ Print pre- and/or post-evaluation surveys (if applicable)

Activity

Ice Breaker

Ask participants to introduce themselves and answer one of the following:

- What is your favourite food? (best for groups with little or no experience discussing political issues)
- If you could vote for anyone to be Prime Minister, dead or alive, who would it be?
- What is your earliest political memory? (best for groups with considerable political experience)
- Describe a time you have made a difference. (best for staff or groups that know each other well)

Time and Tips

5-10 Minutes

- Use this activity to encourage everyone to actively participate and listen.
- Encourage shy or uncomfortable participants to engage with positive responses to their participation.
- For groups larger than 20 divide into smaller groups of no more than 15 and have those groups introduce themselves to each other.

PART I - What Matters To You

Individual Activity:

Pass out the “Issues: What matters to you” sheet. Have each individual participant choose the four issues they consider most important to them. Encourage them to add an issue not listed.

5 Minutes

The choices are intentionally open ended. Encourage participants to clarify the meaning of these terms for themselves.

Small Group Activity:

15 Minutes

This is the heart of the activity. Encourage participants to share their own experiences with issues

Organize participants into groups of 3-5 and have each group decide on the four issues most important to the group.

Have groups write their top four choices on a poster paper.

they care about and note positive interactions amongst participants. If groups are struggling to reach consensus encourage them to combine issues.

Full Group Activity:

Have each group report out and briefly explain their choices.

Write down responses on a whiteboard or flipchart.

10 Minutes (20%)

Write responses using the exact words of participants. Place checkmarks next to responses already shared. At the end, note similarities and differences in responses.

PART II - Play Dough's Republic

Individual Activity:

Pass out the "Play Dough's Republic" instruction sheet, including the "Attributes of Democracy" form Or the "Principles of Democracy" form. Use the "Attributes" form for groups with greater familiarity with the political institutions. Use the "Principles" form for groups with less familiarity with political institutions. Have each individual participant choose the four attributes they consider most important to them. Encourage them to add an element not listed.

5 Minutes

Review the directions with participants. Optional: Review definitions with the group prior to starting activity.

Small Group Activity:

1. Organize participants into the same groups of 3-5 and have each group decide on the four attributes most important to the GROUP.
2. Have groups assign one Play Dough colour to each attribute.
3. Have each group use the Play Dough to create a representation of their ideal democracy.

25 Minutes

This is the heart of the activity. If groups are struggling to reach consensus encourage them to combine attributes. Encourage groups to work collaboratively on their creation.

Full Group Activity:

Have each group share and briefly explain their Play Dough creations.

15 Minutes

Encourage participants to take pictures of their creations and share on social media #DemTalks @samaraCDA

Debrief Activity:

Ask participants to look at the issues they identified as important. Ask them to consider:

1. what about our current democracy makes it possible for them to have their voice heard on the issues they care about,
2. what makes it difficult, and
3. what changes would they make to the current system to make it easier to be heard.

Ask participants to complete any program evaluation forms.

15 Minutes

If the group is less than 15 people, the debrief can be conducted with one large group.

For groups larger than 15 divide into groups of 8-12 participants and discuss the the questions.

CONCLUSION: This activity is designed to strengthen participants' political voice and encourage participants who never or rarely discuss politics to connect issues they care about to democratic participation.

Variations and Extensions:

Simplify --

- Reduce number of choices for issues and/or elements

Expand --

- Have participants rank their choice for issues and attributes from most important to least important.
- Have participants prepare short briefs on issues and/or elements of democracy
- Have participants organize top issues by responsible level of government
- Have participants write a short letter to an elected official explaining why they care about an issue

ESL --

- Provide and review vocabulary terms prior to activity.
- Group participants by shared language backgrounds.

Youth --

- Challenge youth to come up with new form to represent ideal democracy (ie. democracy manicure, democracy mural)

- Encourage each small group to choose one issue to research and present to group to take action.

FAQs

How can I make Play Dough?

[Here](#) is a simple recipe.

<http://theimaginationtree.com/2012/04/best-ever-no-cook-play-dough-recipe.html>

Where can I buy Play Dough?

Walmart sells [individual packs for \\$1](#). These are the best deals for commercially available products.

What if participants find issue choices too simplistic or don't agree on the meaning?

Encourage participants to be more specific and/or provide their own definitions for the issues. The list is only meant as a starting point.

What if I don't have 1 ½ hours?

This activity can be completed over two sessions (Part I and Part II) or limit discussion during the choice of issues.

Additional Resources

Samara's report on [Democracy Talks](#) explains the program's impact and history.

A list of general resources for democratic engagement can be found [here](#).

<http://www.samaracanada.com/samara-in-the-classroom/democracy-talks>

ISSUES: WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Better parks

Better health care

Better education system

More money

Better employment options

Better place to live

Better transportation

Safer neighbourhood

Better support for immigrants

Cleaner environment

Lower taxes

Better support for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities

Better recreation opportunities

Better support for LGBTQ community

More access to arts

ADD AN ISSUE HERE: _____

PLAY DOUGH'S REPUBLIC: CREATING MY IDEAL DEMOCRACY

Directions

Step 1

- From the list on the back of the sheet, choose the four elements that you believe are most important for a strong and healthy democracy.
- If there is an attribute not listed that you think is important, add it!

Step 2

- In your group, choose the four attributes that your group believes are most important for a strong and healthy democracy.
- Mark these four on the list.

Step 3

- As a group, assign a Play Dough colour to each of the four attributes that you chose.
- Write the colour next to the attribute on your list.

Step 4

- As a group, take the colours of clay that correspond to your qualities and build something that represents an ideal democracy.
- It can be a structure, machine, vehicle, animal or anything you like!

Step 5

- Share and your creation with the whole group.
- We would love it if you take a photo of your creation and share with your friends and Samara on Twitter: @SamaraCDA #DemTalks

Attributes of Democracy

ATTRIBUTES	DESCRIPTION	COLOUR
UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE	All citizens are eligible to vote regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, physical capacity.	
LIMITS ON CAMPAIGN FINANCING	The amount of money that political candidates can raise and spend is limited.	
PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS	Rights of minorities and individuals with minority views are protected	
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANDIDATES TO RUN	The process for people to run for political office is open and inclusive	
STRONG AND INDEPENDENT PRESS	Media is free to criticize the government and candidates.	
A STRONG EDUCATION SYSTEM	Voters are well educated and well informed.	
INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY	The courts and law enforcement apply the law equally to everyone including politicians.	
TERM LIMITS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS	Elected officials can only serve a set number of terms.	
SIMPLE VOTING RULES AND PROCEDURES	It is easy to vote	
HIGH VOTER PARTICIPATION	Everyone from all groups participate in elections in high levels.	
OTHER	Make up your own attribute.	

Principles of Democracy

ATTRIBUTES	DESCRIPTION	COLOUR
OPEN	People can find out what government is doing	
TRUSTWORTHY	Politicians do what they say they will do	
SHARED VALUES	Politicians share my values	
FAST	Government makes decisions quickly	
MONEY-SMART	Government spends money in a smart way	
FAIR	Government is does not favour one group of people over another group of people	
INCLUSIVE	People feel included in politics	
UNDERSTANDABLE	People understand what government does and how it works	
AVAILABLE	People can talk to politicians if they want to	
PARTICIPATION	People can participate in politics	
<i>OTHER</i>	<i>What else is important for democracy?</i>	

Democracy Talks

WHERE IS YOUR VOICE LOUDEST?

GOAL:

Help participants understand options for using their voice to address issues of concern to them.

OBJECTIVE: Participants will learn:

1. Options for having their voice heard on public policy issues,
2. To evaluate options for expression,
3. Which level and/or democratic institution is relevant to various issues,
4. The basic role of different forms of expression

AUDIENCE:

Age - over 15

Language -- Shared conversational language

Prior political knowledge/experience -- basic

Group Size -- 4 or more

TIMEFRAME:

Average -- 45 minutes

Minimum -- 20 minutes

Maximum -- 75 minutes

PREPARATION:

Handouts: Print enough for each participant to have one.

- "Where is your voice loudest"

Materials:

- Pen or Pencil for each participant

Set-up:

- Arrange room to allow small groups of 3-5 participants space to work at a table.

Activity

Time and Tips

<p>Ice Breaker/Opening Activity:</p> <p>Ask participants to introduce themselves and share one law they would like to change.</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p>
<p>Individual Activity:</p> <p>Handout and review “Where is your voice loudest?”</p> <p>Ask participants to chose an issue and circle the democratic activity where their voice would be loudest.</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p> <p>Clarify any questions about the various options.</p> <p>Ask participants to chose an issue before completing the sheet.</p> <p>Allow people to share ideas or ask each other questions.</p>
<p>Small Group Activity:</p> <p>Organize participants into groups of 3-5.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have each group chose an issue 2. have each group rank the democratic activities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. From loudest to quietest, and b. From easiest to hardest to do. 3. Have each group chose <u>one</u> activity they would take to have their voice heard on an issue. 	<p>20 Minutes</p> <p>Encourage groups to complete the “other” category</p> <p>Clarify that there is no “right” answer</p>
<p>Full Group Activity:</p> <p>Have each group report out what activity they choose and explain their choice.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p> <p>Record responses on a flipchart or whiteboard.</p>
<p>Debrief/ Closing Activity:</p> <p>Choose one or two activities that participants chose and discuss how participants could make this approach particularly effective. For example, what would make a letter to the editor effective?</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p> <p>If the group is less than 15 people, the debrief can be conducted with one large group.</p> <p>For groups larger than 15 divide into groups of 8-12 participants and discuss the the questions.</p>

CONCLUSION:

This simple activity is another step towards greater political engagement and helps participants consider the range of ways they can have their voice heard even if they don't have the right to vote.

Variations and Extensions:

Simplify --

- Assign participants an issue
- Have participants only rank activities from loudest to quietest
- Limit choices to those that apply to local issues

Expand

- Include more choices for activities
- Have participants research and complete one of the activities
- Discuss how different activities might best be suited for different issues
- Have participants complete the [“Political Participation Checklist”](#)

ESL

- Review the three levels of government and roles of Premiers and Prime Ministers.

Youth

- Discuss and compare youth engagement with engagement by older Canadians from Samara's [“Lightweights?”](#) report.

FAQs

How to contact an Member of Parliament (or any elected official)?

This [blog](#) from Samara offers ten tips.

Additional Resources

Samara's [“Lightweights?”](#) report and [“Political Participation Checklist”](#)

Videos on Levels of Government:

[Student Vote](#)

[Springtide Collective](#)

[TVO](#)

Where Is Your Voice Loudest?

Rank Loudest to Quietest	<u>Activity</u>	Rank Easiest to Hardest
	Email or write a letter to the Prime Minister	
	Email or write a letter to your Member of Parliament	
	Email or write a letter to your local city councillor	
	Organize a protest	
	Vote in an election	
	Speak at a local community meeting	
	Boycott or Buycott a product	
	Join a political party	
	Write a blog about an issue	
	Join a protest	
	Meet with your Member of Parliament (MP)	
	Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper	
	Attend a public meeting with a local elected official	
	Join a group that shares your interest in change	
	Volunteer in an election	
	Donate money to a group working on the issue	
	Talk to friends and neighbors in your community	
	Donate money to political party or candidate	
	Post messages on Facebook and twitter	
	Make a YouTube video.	

Rank the Power Game

GOAL: Help participants explore their own understanding of power and the how political power is distributed in our democracy.

AUDIENCE: This activity is appropriate for all backgrounds and groups. It can easily be modified to work with different educational backgrounds and ages.

TIMEFRAME: The amount of time required will vary considerably depending on the background of participants.

Average - 50 minutes
Minimum - 20 Minutes
Maximum - 1.5 hours

SETTING:

Space - table or wall surface to layout or post “power” cards.
Number of participants: from 4 participants to 400
Number of facilitators: 1 facilitator per 20 participants. .

OBJECTIVES:

1. Increase knowledge and understanding of the roles and relative power of political players and institutions.
2. Increase understanding of the term “power” and “political power.”
3. Identifying power within the leadership roles that may not be recognized as power.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Include

Handouts:

“Rank the Power” handout for each participant
Set of “Rank the Power” cards for each small group (3-5 participants)
HINT - Use different colour paper for each group if possible

Materials:

- Masking tape (if posting power cards on the wall),

- ❑ markers,
- ❑ whiteboard or poster paper,
- ❑ scissors (if power cards are not pre-cut).

Projector or screen with sound if showing Eric Liu TedEd Power Video

SET-UP:

- ❑ Copy handouts
- ❑ Cutup “Rank the Power” cards

Activity

Ice Breaker/Opening Activity:

New Group: Ask people who they would want to be leader of Canada. They can choose anyone from history or any part of the world.

Basic: Write “POWER” on a whiteboard or poster paper. Ask people how that makes them feel?

Advanced: Ask participants to recall a time when they have felt powerful.

Individual Activity:

Have each participant individually complete the “Rank the Power” handout.

Small Group Activity:

1. Put participants in groups of 3-5.
2. Give each group a set of “Rank the Power” cards.
3. Give each participant a “Me” card and ask them to write their name on it.
4. Have each group place the cards in rank order from most powerful to least powerful. Explain that they should be prepared to explain their ranking.
5. After a group has reached consensus and ranked their cards, have them place them along a common wall or table with responses from other groups.

Time and Tips

8 Minutes

For groups smaller less than 15 participants answer as whole group.

For groups with more than 15 participants respond in small groups

Be highly encouraging of all responses.

5 Minutes

Depending on participants background, review the entries on the handout.

Do not spend time discussing the nature of power. This comes later.

20 Minutes

Participants should spend most of their time working in small groups to place the cards in order.

The facilitator's job is to encourage conversation amongst participants when they are ranking the cards by circulating and asking groups probing questions about their ranking.

Encourage participants to consider and discuss different forms of

6. Have each participant put their “Me” card on the common wall or table.

power and different circumstances of power.

Full Group Activity:

The facilitator leads a group discussion analyzing where participants have placed power cards. Consider areas where there is consensus and areas where there are big differences.

Ask participants to explain why they ranked positions as they did?

(Optional) Ask participants to consider how their ranking might change if the question was about:

- Canada going to war
- What is taught in school
- What food you will eat for dinner

Give participants an opportunity to explain why they placed themselves where they did on the power spectrum.

10 Minutes

If the group is larger than 30, consider breaking into 2 or more sub-groups for the debrief.

Use this as an opportunity to explain the various roles of positions listed on power cards.

Debrief/ Closing Activity:

Write “POWER” on a whiteboard or poster paper. Ask participants how that makes them feel?

Ask participants how they might increase their own political power?

Complete any activity feedback surveys.

7 Minutes

To the extent feasible, give each participant an opportunity to respond to the prompts.

CONCLUSION:

This activity is designed to begin a conversation about the nature of political power -- who has it, when and where it is used and how to strengthen ones own political power.

Variations and Extensions:

Simplify -- There are easy ways to reduce the length and complexity of this activity:

1. Reduce the number of power cards (ie make it only for your community),
2. Drop the small group activity and have participants just complete the individual activity and debrief as a whole (works best with groups under 15 participants)

Expand -- There are easy ways to increase the length and complexity of this activity:

1. After completing the full group activity provide more scenarios and move the cards around to reflect the new power for each scenario
2. Consider how the cards and power structure might be different for different countries.
3. Having participants watch the Eric Liu TedEd Video on power:

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-to-understand-power-eric-liu#review>

ESL -- Have participants prepare definitions of and backgrounds on each of the people/positions on the power cards prior to beginning the activity.

Youth -- Assign different positions to each participant prior to the activity and have them research that position.

Provide different scenarios and have them organized themselves so they are standing in order from most powerful to least powerful.

FAQs

This section can include tips and tricks, content answers, sources for materials, etc.

Additional Resources

Demos - The Power Gap <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tkjz5JMCU1A>

Power - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFDcluwugNg&feature=youtu.be>

Power Position Cards:

The Queen of England	Governor-General of Canada
Mayor of My City	Premier of My Province
City Councillor	Member of Parliament (member of governing Party)
Member of Parliament (member of opposition Party)	Member of Provincial Parliament

Chief of Police	The People (residents of Canada)
Secretary-General of the United Nations	Minister of National Defence
Minister of Finance	House of Commons
Senate	Superintendent of Schools

Leader of the Opposition	My Teacher
My Parents	Police Officer
Supreme Court Judge	Drake
CBC Reporter	Editor of the Globe and Mail newspaper

Me	Me

Democracy Talks

About Democracy Talks Activities

Democracy Talks activities are designed to strengthen participants' political voice by motivating involvement, increasing knowledge and enhancing the skills required to be involved in our democracy.

Five Principles of Democracy Talks:

Designed to be used in both academic and non-academic settings, DT activities are based on five principles:

1. Based on the interests of participants.
2. Involves conversation amongst participants and provides opportunities for all voices to be heard.
3. Accessible and engaging for people from a wide range of backgrounds.
4. Fun and meaningful for participants.
5. Simple to deliver for facilitators.

Facilitator's role:

The facilitator's role is to:

1. prepare all the materials,
2. set-up the space,
3. establish a safe and welcoming environment,
4. explain and conduct activities,
5. encourage active engagement by all participants,
6. maintain a pace that ensures activities are completed within the allotted time,
7. collect and report participant feedback.

Facilitators are not required to be experts on Canadian politics or democratic institutions.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION CHECKLIST

- Circulate or repost political information on social networking sites
- Use email or instant messaging to discuss societal/political issues
- Blog about a political issue
- Participate in an online group about a societal/political issue
- Discuss a societal/political issue face to face or on the phone
- Write a letter to the editor about a political issue
- Make a public speech on a political issue
- Organize a public event or meeting about politics
- Sign a petition
- Boycott/“buycott” a product
- Take part in a protest
- Work with others on an issue in my community
- Be active in a community group or organization
- Donate to a political/societal cause
- Do volunteer work
- Contact an elected official about an issue
- Attend a political meeting
- Volunteer in an election
- Donate to a political party or candidate
- Become a member of a political party