

Curriculum aims and goals

The goal of the Social Studies 11 curriculum in terms of democratic citizenship appears to be a focus on a very Canadian understanding of democracy and democratic values. The current prescribed learning outcomes specifically outline an understanding of the government of Canada and the differing governing structures within the provinces and municipalities within Canada as well. The focus on individual rights and the different political parties and their political philosophies and ideologies describes a citizenship education that is almost exclusively focused on the idea of electoral politics as the main focus for education about democracy, with very little discussion placed around the idea of grassroots movements. Even the core outcome of “Developing an appreciation of democracy and what it means to be Canadian speaks to how the curriculum is meant to focus around the assimilation of specific ‘Canadian’ values that each student is expected to describe.

The main transferable skill that is meant to be developed in the current curriculum that relates to democratic citizenship is the idea of ‘demonstrating skills and attitudes of active citizenship, including ethical behaviour, open-mindedness’. Within that large prescribed learning outcome are smaller outcomes that focus more on the concepts of democratic citizenship and the idea of creating an informed citizenry that is capable of becoming involved in the governance and political or social affairs of the community or nation. Specifically the sub-goals of advocating responsibly for our own and others’ rights and a willingness to participate are two of the most obvious avenues of democratic citizenship curriculum in the course. These sub-goals lend themselves to discussions about what kind of action can be done in a society that acceptable and potentially able to create change, which should lead to discussions about the nature of collective action and how the democratic system works.

Beyond this, the curriculum does not discuss in great detail the creation of democratic citizenship values, and instead focuses more on the understanding of specific political values necessary to participate in Canadian democracy. While those values and understandings are needed to maintain an informed citizenry who are able to involve themselves in community or group direct action, it is not sufficient information to be able to lead these sorts of activities and forces individuals to rely on other community leaders to build the skills needed to complete direct democratic reforms.