



LESSON THREE RESOURCES: What is active participation

Teacher and student resources

For a healthy democracy, it's important you take part and have your views heard. There are many ways you can participate in democracy, at both the local and national level.

Active participation is all about being actively involved in the democratic process by voting in elections and referenda, attending and speaking at public meetings, making submissions on public consultations, and holding your elected representatives to account.



Activity 1 – Defining democracy

Teacher resource

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand the ways by which leadership of groups is acquired, exercised, and has consequences for communities and societies.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses.</p>
Learning Through Talk	<p>Year 8 Participates readily in classroom talk, using appropriate verbal and non-verbal language.</p>

Procedure:

- Before going through the content of this lesson, ask students to write down their own definitions of the words: ‘democracy’, ‘elections’ and ‘active participation’ in the table provided in the student resource.
- Now get students to read the whole content section ‘Active participation’, starting with the subsection ‘Democracy and you’.
- Ask students to review the definitions they wrote down beforehand and add revised definitions in the table provided in the student resource.

This document will be updated in 2025

- Ask the students to share how their definitions changed, either with a partner, in a group or with the class.
- Finally, find a dictionary definition. Instruct students to add this definition in their table.

Democracy

“citizen” **Demos**

+

kratos “power”

Activity 1 – Defining democracy

Student resource

In the table below, write your own definition of the words ‘democracy’, ‘elections’ and ‘active participation’.

Concept	My definition
Democracy	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Elections	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Active participation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Democracy

“citizen” **Demos**

+

kratos “power”

Now that your teacher has taken you through the content, has your definition of the words changed? Write your revised definitions in the table and discuss how it changed with a partner, in a group or with the class.

Rad the section ‘Democracy and you’ for further information.

Concepts	My revised definitions
Democracy	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Elections	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Active participation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Finally, find a dictionary definition of these concepts. Write the definition in the table:

Concepts	Dictionary definitions
Democracy	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Elections	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Active participation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Activity 2 – Write a submission to your local board

Mahi Tuarua – Te tāpae kōrero ki tō poari ā-rohe



This activity requires access to the internet.

Teacher resource

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating in order to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses).</p>

Procedure:

- Get students to read through the content of the section ‘Ways to participate in democracy’ (page 3), specifically the section relating to local board submissions.

- Ask students to choose a topic that they are passionate about that affects their local area. Potential topics to write about include:
 - Dogs in public places/ beaches
 - Rubbish and recycling
 - Cycleways and walkways
 - Maintenance of local parks
 - Places for young people to hang out safely
 - Swimming pools or leisure centres
 - Transport and road safety
- Students need to research the topic and decide what it is they would like to change or recommend.
 - Research options could include checking out [local board plans](#), media articles and videos.
- Students then write their submission to the local board. Some writing prompts are included in the student resource to help get them started:
 - Write a title
 - Introduce yourself and why this topic is important to you
 - Describe what you like / don't like about the current situation and what you'd like to change
 - End with a conclusion (a summary of why you are writing this)
- Please feel free to send any completed submissions through to your local board. [Find your local board contact details here](#)

Activity 2 – Write a submission to your local board

Mahi Tuatoru – Te tāpae kōrero ki tō poari ā-rohe



This activity requires access to the internet.

Student resource

This activity is about interacting with your local elected representatives by writing to your local board about an issue you care about for your community.



First, choose a topic that you are passionate about and that affects your local area. Topics could include:

- Dogs in public places/ beaches
- Rubbish and recycling
- Cycleways and walkways
- Maintenance of local parks
- Places for young people to hang out safely
- Swimming pools or leisure centres
- Transport and road safety

Once you have decided on a topic, do some research. You could find out what your local board is planning about it by checking out [local board plans](#), looking for news stories and opinions in the media. Have a think about what your own opinion is. Is there anything you would like to change?

Now you are ready to write your submission to the local board. Some writing prompts are included below to help get you started.

If you would like to send your completed submissions through to your local board, you can [find your local board contact details here](#).

Local board submission – recommended structure

- Write a title
- Introduce yourself and why this topic is important to you
- Describe what you like / don't like about the current situation and what you'd like to change
- End with a conclusion (a summary of why you are writing this and your suggestions)

Local board submission - template

Tēnā koe

My name is, I am a student
at and I am writing to you because

.....
.....

I notice in the most recent local board plan,

.....
.....

I would like to give my views on this important topic.

At present,

.....
.....

In addition,

.....
.....

This affects

.....
.....

A potential solution I see is

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.....

.....

This would

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.....

.....

Another idea is

.....
.....

.....

.....
.....

To conclude, _____

Ngā mihi nui

Activity 3 – Have Your Say in a public consultation



This activity requires access to the internet.

Teacher resource

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Studies	<p>Level 3: Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.</p> <p>Level 4: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p> <p>Level 5: Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>End of Year 8 Writing Deliberately choosing a clear and logical text structure to suit their purpose and audience, sometimes innovating in order to achieve this.</p> <p>End of Year 10 Writing Achieving coherence and cohesion in paragraphs or in longer sections on their writing (e.g. by inserting a subheading, by using a topic sentence, or by using discourse markers such as although and furthermore to make meaning clear and to link clauses).</p>

Procedure:

- Visit [AKL Have Your Say](#) to find open consultations you can have your say in.
- Consultation topics can range from the region-wide Auckland annual budget to very localised proposals such as change to a playground or park.
- Once a topic is selected, get the students to review the documents summarising the proposal
- Get them to voice their opinion and debate: what do they agree with? What do they disagree with? Why? What would they propose instead?

- If you wish, you can get students to write their feedback formally and send it in response to the consultation.



Activity 3 – Have Your Say in a public consultation



This activity requires access to the internet.

Student resource

This activity is about learning how to have your say in a public consultation and help shaping our city.

Visit [AKL Have Your Say](#) with your class to find open consultations.

Consultation topics can range from the region-wide Auckland annual budget to very localised proposals such as change to a playground or park.

Select a consultation you want to have your say on with your class.

Review the documents summarising the proposal and discuss with your classmates:

- what do you agree with?
- what do you disagree with?
- what would you propose instead?
- why?

With your teacher, decide if you wish to submit your class feedback on the consultation page. If you do, you will need to write the points you discussed above and send it to the email address listed on the consultation page. Make sure to include information about your school and class as the submitters.



Activity 4 – What are referenda?

Mahi Tuawhā – He aha tēnei mea te tāpaetanga pōti?

Teacher resource

Curriculum alignment

Curriculum	Achievement Objectives
Social Sciences	<p>Level 3 Understand how groups make and implement rules and laws.</p> <p>Level 4 Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.</p>
Literacy Learning Progressions	<p>Year 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decoding texts with such automaticity that they do not need to decode all words. Use their growing academic and content-specific vocabulary to understand texts. Create content that is concise and relevant to the curriculum task, often including carefully selected detail and/or comment that supports or elaborates on the main point. <p>Year 10 Include a complex range of ideas expressed concisely (e.g. in short answers).</p>
English Language Learning Progressions	<p>Reading - Stage 3 Texts use some lower frequency and technical words that are not easy to infer from the context.</p>
Learning Through Talk	<p>Year 8 Confident and competent in asking questions with familiar or unfamiliar people.</p>

Procedure:

- Firstly, read and discuss with the students the information about referenda (page 2) from the section 'Democracy and you'.
- Next, you can survey the class on one or more historical referendum questions.
- Once they have voted and counted the results, share the actual percentages from the referendums below.

Compulsory military training (1949)

3 August 1949	Are you in favour of compulsory military training?	Yes 77.9% No 22.1%
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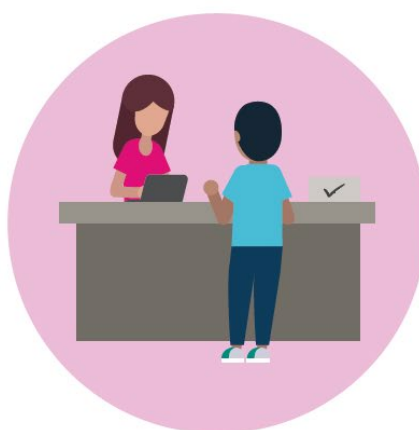
Smacking as a parental correction (2009)

25 August 2009	Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?	Yes 11.98% No 87.4%
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Cannabis legalisation (2020)

17 October 2020	Do you support the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill?	Yes 48.4% No 50.7%
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- How do the actual results compare to the students' votes? Get students to write a paragraph explaining the results of the class vote and giving possible reasons that the results are similar or different from the past.
- Writing frames are included below for students who require further support:
 - The majority of the class voted...
 - The class results are similar/different to the actual referendum.
 - A possible reason for the similarities/ differences is that...

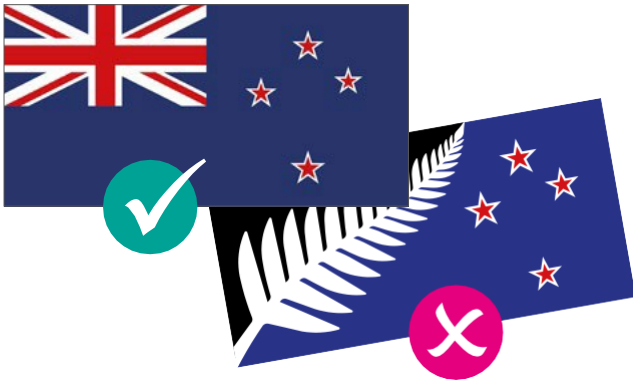


Activity 4 – What are referenda?

Mahi Tuawhā – He aha tēnei mea te tāpaetanga pōti?

Student resource

Go through to the section on referenda from ‘Democracy and you’ to learn about what a referendum is and what different types of referenda exist.



Then, vote in one or more of the historical referenda included below.

Once you have made up your decision, compare your vote with your classmates’ and tally the results.

After your teacher has shared the results from the actual referendum, write a paragraph explaining how they compare with your class voting. Are the results similar or completely different? What reasons can you give for this?

Compulsory military training (1949)

In 1949, a referendum was held to see what the public’s view was on compulsory military training.

	I vote for compulsory military training	I vote against compulsory military training
Tally marks		
Percentage		

Smacking children (2009)

In 2009, a citizens-initiated referendum was held to find out views on smacking children.

Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?		
	YES	NO
Tally marks		

Percentage		
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Cannabis legalisation (2020)

In 2020, a referendum was held alongside the general elections. In this referendum, you could vote on whether the recreational use of cannabis should become legal.

Do you support the proposed Cannabis Legalisation and Control Bill?		
	YES	NO
Tally marks		
Percentage		

