

# C6

LESSON 6  
CHILDREN  
V.1



political

## “OUR TOWN”: CREATING RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COMMUNITIES

### CHILDREN LESSON 6: POLITICAL PEACE 1

#### AGE(S)

Recommended for ages 8-12

#### TIME REQUIRED

1 hour

#### TEACHER PREPARATION

To prepare for this lesson...

- Read the “[5 Spheres of Peace](#)” NPA Framework focusing on the political peace sphere
- Read the [Teacher’s Guide](#) for preparation and reflection questions

#### MATERIALS

- “Our Town” worksheet
- Pencils/ Pens/ Markers

#### LEARNING GOALS

- To explore the connection between the fulfillment of rights, and individual and community responsibilities
- To consider political engagement through group decision-making

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students are given the opportunity to engage in the process of political dialogue by identifying rights and corresponding responsibilities they feel are important for their fictional towns
- Students are given time to reflect upon their processes of group decision-making
- Through class discussion students can explore skills useful for building peace within group decision-making processes

#### INTRODUCTION

Political engagement is an experience unknown to many children. Students may be familiar with the voting process or community dialogue if their parents are active in schools, religious institutions, or politics. With the busyness of modern life, community involvement is becoming less common in family life. Even with parental modeling, many students have never been given the opportunity to engage in the decision-making processes that impact their lives. Teachers and schools often dictate the rules students abide by while on campus. At home, parents decide the rules and consequences for breaking those rules. Through their high school years, students are given behavioral guidelines by the institutions they belong to, leaving them ill-equipped to engage in the dialogue which awaits them in the larger community. Students not only lack the skills to advocate for themselves, they also have little experience with processes that can help build peace in political decision-making.

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the political sphere of peacebuilding by ex-

aming processes used in group decision-making and the concept that individual and communal responsibilities work to ensure the rights of all community members. Facilitating group decision-making processes of many kinds such as voting, consensus building, and collaborative projects along with student reflections on experiencing these processes can nurture the skills needed to build peace while engaging in the political sphere. Through personal experience, students can reflect upon which of these processes are effective and contribute to peacebuilding. Introducing the concepts of rights and their corresponding responsibilities can help students begin to see political involvement as a social responsibility that can help ensure the rights they hope to enjoy.

This activity gives students the opportunity to see this interdependence by engaging in political discourse through the creation of rights and responsibilities for community members in fictional towns. It is vital that teachers do not dictate the rights and responsibilities of student groups. This can contribute to students being dependent upon institutions for behavioral codes rather than engaging students in thinking processes needed to engage in political dialogue. The role of the educator is to support students in this process by asking questions about how students are engaging with one another and how individual rights may impact the group.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is a right?
- What rights do you have?
- Who guarantees or gives you these rights?
- Does everyone have these rights?
- Do you have any responsibilities or actions you need to take to be sure these rights will exist for yourself and others in the future?
- How does the process of agreeing upon rights and keeping individual responsibilities help build peace in communities?

## OPENING DISCUSSION

Review with students the concepts of peacebuilding in the personal and social spheres. Asking the following questions may help students think back on the previous lessons:

- What are a few of the many ways people can build peace within themselves?
- What activities did we engage in when we studied the personal sphere of peacebuilding? Were these helpful to you? Why or why not?
- What are some of the many ways people can build peace with others?
- What are some of the activities we engaged in when we studied the social sphere of peacebuilding? Were these activities helpful to you? Why or why not?
- Thinking about these different peacebuilding skills, how do you think we can build peace in communities?

### TEACHER TIP

Students belong to many different communities including their geographic community or neighborhood, school community, and communities built upon similar ideas, traditions or activities such as communities which are faith-based, ethnic, or even after school classes or clubs. Help students draw on their many different community experiences in order to think about how conflict is resolved and how peace may be built in these different settings.

## ACTIVITY 1: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Explain to students that the purpose of this activity is to think about how peace can be built in communities through finding ways of working together and making decisions as a group.

**Teacher Note:** The questions below have been grouped by age. The intention behind this distinction is to provide appropriate questions for students based upon their development, prior knowledge, and understanding. Regardless of the labels, teachers should examine all of the questions and choose which questions are most appropriate for their students based on these factors.

For younger students (ages 8-10): Today we also want to think about what rights and responsibilities mean. What does it mean to have the right to something? Do you have any rights in the classroom? At home? As a citizen? Who gives you those rights? How are those rights protected?

For older students (Ages 10 -12): Today we want to also think about how groups make decisions. Are these processes fair?

Do they include everyone? Are they effective? Do they help build peace? Why or why not? We also want to begin to think about what systems communities have that help build peace. Can systems of laws or rules build peace? How? How can these systems also cause conflict or inflict harm? What responsibilities do individual community members have that can help these laws work effectively?

2. Share with students that some laws were created to help protect people's rights. In order for these laws to work individuals have responsibilities that help protect rights. For example, the right to vote, the right to free speech, or even the right to feel safe at school. All of these rights are dependent upon other people acting in a certain way. Others need to give you the opportunity or access to vote, let you share your ideas and opinions, and act in ways that help you feel safe at school. These actions can be described as responsibilities. These responsibilities help ensure these rights are given to all people. If students feel they should have the right to learn at school, who would be involved in protecting that right? What responsibilities would they have? How would other students act to protect that right? What would the teacher do to protect that right? What about the individual student? If the community agrees that everyone deserves the right to learn at school then every person in the classroom has responsibilities to protect that right.

3. Ask students what other rights they think they should have in school. To follow-up, ask students who would guarantee they have these rights? How would these people act to protect those rights? What would their responsibilities be? Would all of these individual rights be fair to others?

**Teacher Note:** Some students may bring up examples such as having the right to do whatever they feel like while at school. Responding to those examples with questions about whether or not the rest of the group feels this right should be protected can be helpful in continuing the conversation and getting students to think about how individual rights can sometimes infringe upon the rights of others. It is then up to the group to decide whether or not this is a right they want to guarantee or protect.

4. Break students up into small groups and pass out one copy of the "Our Town" worksheet to each group. Tell students that today they get to be pioneers of sorts. Each group has just created a new town. This town has no current rules or laws for the citizens to live by. Their job today is to come up with the name of their town, a description of their town, and a new set of rights and corresponding responsibilities that group members agree to live by. Tell students at the bottom of the page or on a separate piece of paper they can draw pictures of their town and what their rights and responsibilities look like in action.

5. Give students 20 to 30 minutes to finish their community's rights and responsibilities list. Walk around to each of the student groups and help them by asking questions about how they want to feel in their community, how they want to be treated in their community, how should people act toward one another. Remind students of some of the peacebuilding skills they have been practicing such as active listening and the conflict resolution process. Tell students they can use these skills as they are trying to make decisions in their groups.

6. When students are done collaborating, have one or two students from each group present their town to the rest of the class. Have each group read their list of rights and responsibilities and explain their drawings to the class.

7. Once all of the student groups have shared, ask students if there were any rights and responsibilities presented that would be useful in building peace in a community. How would these rights and responsibilities work toward building peace? Ask students if they think being involved in deciding what rights and responsibilities were chosen is important? Why? Would they feel differently about having to live with these rights and responsibilities if they were new to town and this system was already put in place? If yes, how?

Ask students about the process they undertook in deciding upon their community rights and responsibilities. What did this process look like? How did students decide? Were there any skills they used which were helpful in decision-making such as voting, active listening, conflict resolution? Did everyone in the community agree to the list? If not, how do you think that might impact peace in your community?

## TEACHER TIP

Before beginning activity 1, think about rights and responsibilities that will be relevant examples to your students. What rights do students have in your classroom? What rights do they have at school? Have they learned any historical examples of rights such as those gained through the Civil Rights movement, women's suffrage, the U.S. Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? If the students have no background information or personal experience with rights you may want to facilitate some lessons on these historical examples or have some discussions on student rights within the classroom before continuing the lesson.

Some example activities may include creating a classroom chart of rights and responsibilities that students agree to uphold, or students can draw a picture of one way they want to be treated at school. Each of these drawings can be placed around the classroom, and the whole class can discuss what right and community responsibilities correspond with this drawing.

## CLOSING

In closing ask students to reflect individually or as a group on the following questions:

For younger students (ages 8-10): How do rights and responsibilities help build peace in communities? What processes should be used to come up with these rights and responsibilities?

For older students (ages 10-12): What political processes are used in schools, communities, nations or internationally that give individuals the opportunity to participate in deciding which rights and responsibilities they live by? Are those processes peacebuilding processes? Why or why not?

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Introduce students to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by creating a passport of rights as provided in the book [Our World, Our Rights: Teaching about rights and responsibilities in the Elementary School](#) by Amnesty International.

2. Look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and have students draft a “Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.” These responsibilities uphold the rights of the UDHR.

## REGISTRATION, FEEDBACK & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Use of this curriculum is free – no registration is required. However, we encourage you to take 3-5 minutes to complete our [registration/feedback form](#) so we may know how and where the curriculum is being used, what is most effective, and how we can continue to improve it.

\*This curriculum was developed by [Tony Jenkins](#) and [Tiffany Jenkins](#). Reproduction and distribution is permissible and encouraged, however credit should be given to the authors and the [National Peace Academy](#).

## RESOURCES

- [Abc Teaching Human Rights: Practical Activities for Primary and Secondary Schools](#) by the United Nations
- [We are all born free](#) by Amnesty International. A children’s book on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- [Our World, Our Rights: Teaching about rights and responsibilities in the Elementary School](#) by Amnesty International

# “OUR TOWN” WORKSHEET

**Name of town:**

**Description your town:**

*What does your town look like? Are there any geographic features of your town? How are the buildings arranged? What materials are used? Is there any features that make your town special?*

## Rights and Corresponding Responsibilities of Townspeople

Rights of townspeople



Responsibilities of townspeople


## Group Decision-Making Process

*In the future, how will your town make group decisions? (Ex. voting, coming to a consensus, have a leader that makes all of the decisions?) Why was this process chosen?*

*How will this process help build peace in your town?*

**Draw a picture of your town:**